

GUIDE TO QUALITY

Even Start Family Literacy Program Implementation and Continuous Improvement

Volume 1, Revised



GUIDE TO QUALITY:

Even Start Family Literacy Program

Implementation and Continuous Improvement

Volume I, Revised

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August 2001



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GUIDE TO QUALITY: EVEN START FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM

Volume 1 (Revised)

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PREFACE

This Guide is a revised version of the original **Guide to Quality**, published in 1995, and it includes new research and best practices from the field of family literacy and programs throughout the country. The research findings from the multiple fields that comprise family literacy are supported and augmented by the first-hand experiences and knowledge of practitioners and program administrators. This revised Volume I replaces the original Guide and will have a companion guide, Volume II, that will cover additional topics and program services (to be published in 2001-2002).

Some of the highlights of the revised Volume I are:

- A new section on Program Leadership and Management.
- Separate treatment of Parenting Education and Parent-Child Interactive Literacy Activities.
- An enhanced focus on literacy (for example, Home Visiting has been changed to Home-Based Instruction).
- An emphasis on program design and evaluation that leads to continuous improvement of program services.
- An appendix containing the Even Start Family Literacy Program statute, and references to legal requirements that apply to Even Start program administration and services.
- New research references and resources.

Acknowledgements

Many people provided guidance and feedback throughout the writing of this Guide. From the U.S. Department of Education, we would like to thank: Patricia McKee, Miriam Whitney, Doris Sligh, Tanielle Johnson and Laura Lazo (Even Start Program office); DonnaMarie Marlow (Migrant Education); and Tracy Rimdzius (Planning and Evaluation Service). We received invaluable comments and suggestions from Even Start state coordinators and staff from agencies, such as Parents as Teachers, who participated in focus groups. And special thanks goes to Diane D'Angelo of RMC Research, who contributed greatly to the writing and review of the Guide.

We hope that the accumulated research, wisdom and practice contained in this Guide help you to design and conduct programs that enable families to reach their literacy and life goals, thereby improving the lives of those you touch by helping them to realize their dreams for a better life.

M. Christine Dwyer
Teresa R. Sweeney
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PURPOSE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE GUIDE

Purpose

Effective family literacy programs are an important part of President Bush's education agenda and pledge to "leave no child behind."¹ The ***Guide to Quality: Even Start Family Literacy Program Implementation and Continuous Improvement Volume I (Revised)*** covers what has been learned by Even Start program staff in the field and research that informs practice from the last ten years. The Guide describes characteristics of high quality, effective Even Start programs, and is intended to be used for multiple purposes related to improving program quality. This Guide: (1) serves as an outline of important program characteristics and practices for implementing new and existing Even Start programs; (2) provides a self-assessment tool that programs can use to identify strengths and weaknesses, and areas for staff development and continuous program improvement; (3) helps state personnel and peer review teams to improve programs by identifying characteristics of quality programs, as well as noting indications of possible problems; and (4) gives potential collaborators information about Even Start goals.

The ultimate purpose of the Guide is to improve literacy and self-sufficiency outcomes for Even Start families.

The statements of quality included here are intended as guidelines that can be used to design effective family literacy programs based on research and best practices. Scientifically-based research available from the fields of early childhood education, literacy and parenting is reflected in this Guide. The U.S. Department of Education (the Department) perceives the design of local programs to be a matter of state and local discretion, once the statutory program requirements are met. The quality statements are examples of approaches that have led to successful outcomes; they are not program requirements. Even well-managed and effective programs may not implement all the suggestions included in this Guide. This Guide does not replace federal laws or program guidance; programs must meet all of the requirements of the Even Start law, Part B of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 (ESEA), as reauthorized and amended by the Literacy Involves Families Together (LIFT) Act of 2000 (**see Appendix**).

Development

The original² and revised Guides were developed in response to requests from Even Start state coordinators for a document they could use during project site visits to engage staff in discussions about "what makes a quality family literacy program." The process of development included input and review from Even Start and other family literacy practitioners, Even Start state coordinators and federal staff.

The Guide incorporates information from a variety of sources: (1) Even Start national evaluation results; (2) research in fields related to Even Start, specifically early childhood education, adult education, collaboration, parenting education and home visiting; (3) the accumulated wisdom and practice of family literacy program staff and administrators that has been shared through conferences and site visits; (4) the theoretical base that has emerged

¹ Bush, G.W. (2001). ***No Child Left Behind***. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

² Dwyer, C. (1995). ***Guide to Quality: Even Start Family Literacy Programs***. Developed by RMC Research Corporation for the Even Start Program, Office of Compensatory Education. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

for family literacy led by the work of the National Center for Family Literacy; (5) the work of other fields in developing indicators of quality, especially adult education and the National Institute for Literacy; and (6) legal requirements in the Even Start program legislation.

Special Populations

Even Start programs that serve special populations (for example, migrant or English language learners) or operate in specialized contexts (for example, isolated rural areas, homeless shelters or prisons) will need to adapt the quality statements to their program circumstances. Some of the quality statements may not apply or they may apply very differently to these programs. The staff of programs serving special populations may need to consider cultural and linguistic characteristics of their families and adjust services accordingly.

Organization of the Guide

The statements of quality are presented within twelve major topic areas. In practice, these areas are integrated so there are many interconnections across the topics.

- Each topic area begins with a statement of the primary goal or “**challenge**” associated with that topic or program component. The challenge is followed by an “**Even Start Note**,” which contains information about federal requirements or practices that are particular to Even Start programs.
- Next, “**quality considerations**” are listed for each topic. These are statements of conditions associated with high quality programs based on evaluation, research, theory, best practices, and legal requirements.
- The quality considerations are followed by “**signs of problems**” in each topic area. These are intended to be “red flags,” and may be used to prompt discussion or to facilitate program review and technical assistance.
- “**Snapshot**” descriptions of diverse family literacy projects are included. These examples illustrate how the quality considerations can be implemented, and are intended to give a picture of program practices that may inspire staff as they design and modify their projects.
- The Appendix contains the complete **Even Start statute**, including amendments made by the Literacy Involves Families Together (LIFT) Act.
- References for major **resource documents** are included at the end of the guide.
- Finally, the quality considerations are provided in a workbook format as a “**self-assessment guide**” for programs.

USING THE GUIDE FOR CONTINUOUS PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

Lessons from the National Evaluations of Even Start

The purpose of the Even Start Family Literacy Program (Even Start) is to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving educational opportunities for the Nation's low-income families through the integration of early childhood education, adult literacy (adult basic education or English as a Second Language), and parenting education in a unified family literacy program. Under Even Start, Federal financial assistance has been provided since 1989 for family-centered education projects to help parents gain the literacy and parenting skills they need to become full partners in the education of their young children (ages birth through seven), and to assist those children in reaching their full potential as learners. The Department has conducted three National Evaluations of Even Start,³ which have traced the growth, changes, progress and trends among programs. There are direct connections between the quality considerations suggested in this Guide and findings from the national evaluations. Whether a program retains families, offers sufficient hours and types of services, and collaborates with other agencies to meet families' needs greatly affects the participation rates and success of family members. A few highlights of the evaluation findings are:

- **Intensity of Services affects Participation:** In Adult, Parenting and Early Childhood Education, greater hours of services offered correlate with greater hours of participation.

Adult Education. When 16 or less hours of service are offered per month, adults' participation averages 100 hours per year. When 48 or more hours of service are offered per month, adults' participation averages 216 hours per year.

Parenting Education. When 8 or less hours of service are offered per month, adults' participation averages 29 hours per year. When 25 or more hours of service are offered per month, adults' participation averages 80 hours per year.

Early Childhood Education. When 24 or less hours of service are offered per month, children's participation averages 235 hours per year. When 80 or more hours of service are offered per month, children's participation averages 410 hours per year.

- **Support Services affect Participation:** When comparing the average number of support services families receive to their hours of participation in Adult, Parenting and Early Childhood Education, a greater number of support services correlates with greater hours of participation.

Adult Education. When families receive no support services, adults' average participation in adult education is 53 hours per year. When families receive five to nine types of support services, adults' average participation in adult education is 215 hours per year.

Parenting Education. When families receive no support services, adults' average participation in parenting education is 17 hours per year. When families receive five to nine types of support services, adults' average participation in parenting education is 76 hours per year.

³ United States Department of Education. (1998). *National Evaluation of The Even Start Family Literacy Program: Evidence from the Past and a Look to the Future*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service.

United States Department of Education. (2001). *Third National Even Start Evaluation*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service.

Early Childhood Education. When families receive no support services, children's average participation in early childhood education is 260 hours per year. When families receive five to nine types of support services, children's average participation in early childhood education is 432 hours per year.

- **Length of Participation affects Goal Attainment:** Families that participate in Even Start for 12 months or more experience greater success in achieving their goals. While 15% of families achieved their goals within four to six months, 21% of families achieved their goals by remaining in the program for seven to 12 months. However, the greatest gains were made by those who participated for one and a half to two years — 34% of those families achieved their goals.

Another important finding relates to families' involvement in the above-mentioned services and in parent-child interactive literacy activities. Overall, families in projects that dedicated significant amounts of time to parents and children learning and playing together had measurable improvements in their home environments compared to families in projects with considerably less parent-child time. Some of the indicators of improved home environment were: having more reading materials in the home; practicing positive disciplinary approaches; and parents and children engaging in learning activities related to daily events and routine family activities.

Even Start Services and Indicators of Program Quality

Family literacy programs are complex to implement because they rely on cooperation among education and other community services, and require knowledge of best practices in a number of fields. In 1995, the Department published the first edition of the **Guide to Quality** to highlight the practices associated with programs that produced positive outcomes for families. The practices listed in the **Guide to Quality** came to be widely known in the family literacy field as "program quality indicators."

In a move toward increasing the quality of all Even Start programs, Congress amended Section 1210 of the Even Start law (Part B of Title I of the ESEA) in 1998 to require that all states develop "indicators of program quality" based on the best available research and evaluation data. The amendments also require States to use those indicators to monitor, evaluate and improve the progress of Even Start projects. ***But some confusion was introduced at the same time because Section 1210 uses the term "quality indicators" in a new way, meaning indicators that describe performance outcomes for adults and children.*** For example, required indicator categories in the law include attainment of secondary diplomas or equivalents and employment for adults, and progress on reading readiness skills and school attendance for children. In addition to the required indicators for participant outcomes, the law allows states to develop other participant and program quality indicators. **Program quality indicators** that describe best practices in the **design and delivery of Even Start services** are the subject of this Guide.

Use of the Guide by state agencies

This revised edition of the Guide provides ideas for state agencies to use in developing quality standards for Even Start program implementation to supplement the required performance outcomes. States could select indicators of quality from the Guide that they consider important enough to require of all their programs. These may include: (1) expectations associated with staff development and staff supervision; (2) the nature and frequency of home-based instruction; (3) procedural requirements, such as exit and transition policies; and (4) particular features of instructional approaches, such as explicit teaching of phonological awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension skills. States are encouraged to focus local programs' attention on best practices in order to emphasize the quality of program delivery as well as program outcomes.

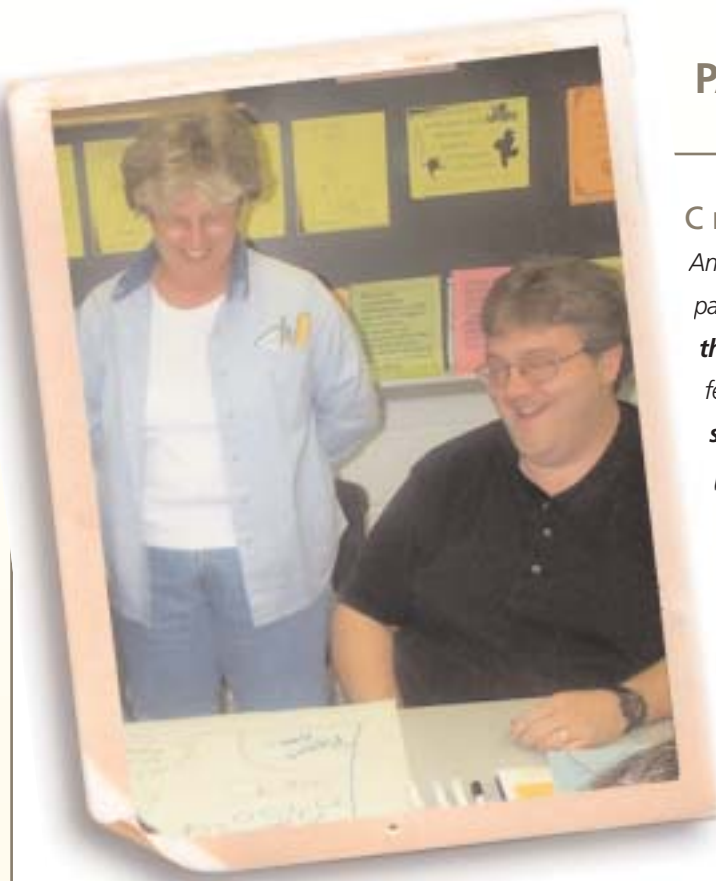
The quality considerations in this Guide are based on evaluation and research findings, and the advice of expert theorists. When particular intensities or ranges of behavior are suggested, they are grounded in evidence from research. Individual states may choose to be more prescriptive than the Guide in their setting of quality standards for programs. For example, a state may decide to require programs to maintain particular staff-to-family ratios or provide a specific number of service hours.

Use of the Guide by local programs

Local Even Start programs should consult their state's plan for information about the specific program standards and performance outcomes that apply to them. The terms or phrases used to describe different types of expectations may vary by state. States usually make distinctions in terminology between qualities of program implementation (often called "quality indicators," the subject of this Guide) and outcomes for participants (often called "performance indicators"). In some cases, they are both called program quality indicators or other similar terms. The purpose of using indicators to measure program quality is more important than the terminology. Local program administrators are encouraged to use the indicators in this Guide for reviewing and assessing local program implementation, whether or not their state agency requires them to measure program quality in a formal way.

SCENES IN THE LIFE OF EVEN START PROGRAMS

The following snapshots are based on examples from local Even Start programs throughout the country, the Even Start National Evaluation, and work of the National Center for Family Literacy and RMC Research Corporation.



PARTNERSHIPS, COLLABORATION & RECRUITMENT

CREATING A VISION AND A PLAN

An urban school district and a county non-profit family service agency are partners on a successful Even Start proposal, and they are **implementing the plan together**. The Even Start program is scheduled to open in a few months. **Community agencies representing a wide range of services** – the housing authority, Head Start, adult basic literacy – supported the proposal and wrote contracts with the new Even Start entity. These contracts describe the services and resources they will provide as part of their collaboration with the program. The partners and collaborating agencies discussed their **vision** for the program as part of writing the proposal, and the new Even Start director, Angela, wants to get everyone back together as soon as possible to develop a detailed first year plan based on this vision. She knows that she cannot assume everyone has the same approach or agenda for the families they will serve, and that all the agencies need to develop good working relationships for the Even Start program to be successful.

When the school district and the family service agency were writing the proposal, they asked some of the collaborators and local leaders if they would serve on an **advisory board**. Angela is holding an “opening celebration” for the Center, where her staff, advisory board members, and staff from other programs will meet and get to know each other. Angela and the partners will explain the **purpose and services of Even Start**, and outline the types of support the new Center needs. In fact, one of the board members has already donated office furniture. It is important that everyone involved can articulate the vision and their commitment, and represent the program in their personal and professional circles.

One collaboration challenge that Angela already anticipates is the relationship with the Head Start program that operates in the local schools. Angela sees no **duplication of services** and little competition for families, but she wants to avoid any perception of real or imagined “turf wars” between programs. There are a large number of families who need the services of Even Start and Head Start, and collaborators have been chosen because they can reach different target populations and serve different needs. In fact, at the first **planning meeting** of collaborating agencies, representatives made short presentations about each **program’s mission, services, eligibility, and client demographics and profile**. One strategy Angela is going to suggest at the next planning meeting is that they develop a **joint screening and intake tool**. This will facilitate the referral of families to appropriate agencies and ensure that they receive some services while waiting to enroll in programs. The agencies have already implemented a **tracking system for referrals** made among programs, so a common intake tool would enhance cooperation and management of services to families.

The collaborating agencies have already started **joint staff training**. The first steps were easy because agencies that already had scheduled training shared that information. Also, the agencies’ staffs filled out surveys concerning what **topics they were interested in**, what their subject and training expertise were, and if they were willing to present cross-training workshops. Some of the topics they said they would like to have training in were: child development, literacy, nutrition, health issues, legal services, and parenting education. The staffs of Even Start and Head Start have also decided to hold a **joint family day event**, because they anticipate they may have some families in common.

The partner agencies, advisory board members and Angela plan to have a **retreat** at the end of the first program year. They will review the budget, program records, and progress made during the first year. Some of the topics that staff and board members have suggested for discussion are whether the recruitment and intake processes are reaching the neediest families, and uncovering their social service as well as literacy needs, and if there are sufficient services available to meet the identified needs. They will also **set goals for the second year**, and identify resources to support the long-term program plans.

SIX MONTHS LATER, RECRUITMENT IS UNDERWAY

Angela and her staff developed an annual recruitment plan using **multiple methods and resources**. The plan includes: a highly visible **media campaign** (for example, public service announcements, calendar of events, ads in newspapers, flyers, brochures, posters); an open house twice a year; monthly special events; participation in community events (for example, fairs, neighborhood days); and a schedule for distributing materials through community agencies and in neighborhoods. Recruitment materials are written in the languages and at the literacy level of the families targeted by the program. Neighborhood canvassing is done as often as possible; at a minimum, it is done three times a year. Teams of staff members canvass neighborhoods with which they are most familiar. **Current Even Start participants** are encouraged and asked to **join the recruiting teams**. Canvassing is frequently done door-to-door, particularly targeting homes with young children's toys in the yards and hallways. Staff also visit the local laundromats and convenience stores to talk about Even Start and to leave brochures. Staff set recruitment goals related to identifying families that are most in need based on profiles of the community, which they get from local government and other agency annual reports.

Calls are made to potential families, and are followed up with **personal visits** whenever possible. Staff and parents complete a "screening questionnaire" at home, which is intended to describe the family as well as provide clues about their literacy skills. For instance, staff may ask the age and educational level of all persons living in the home, what they enjoy doing together in their leisure time, what activities the children do at home, if there are special concerns about any family member, and what about the Even Start program sounds important or appeals to the family. The staff select the **families most in need of Even Start services** based on this screening tool. Staff need to keep in mind the program's limited resources and determine how they will most effectively serve the families most in need. Staff will refer families to other services in the community if Even Start has a waiting list. Staff **review the waiting list each month** and stay in contact with the families by mail and phone. Staff talk about the **expectations of participants** with each family before they enroll in Even Start. In many cases, the staff provide some type of support to the families until they can enroll, such as offering free books.

Each staff member must be able to articulate the purpose and services of Even Start because **recruitment is a continual process**. To prepare, staff model talking about Even Start to potential families and referring agencies during staff meetings. Each staff member sets recruitment goals, such as number of monthly contacts with families and agencies. Recruitment becomes a weekly agenda item at staff meetings. Angela has hired bilingual staff to communicate with Spanish-speaking families during recruitment and enrollment. Staff exhibit their desire and need to be **knowledgeable about community resources** by serving on other agencies' committees and boards, which also increases the visibility and outreach of the Even Start program. Many Even Start family events are planned with and include families in other agencies, such as Head Start and the YMCA. Resources and facilities are shared so that families learn about the other services. Ongoing and continuous community outreach builds trust and **relationships with collaborating staff**.

HOW PROGRAMS ADAPT TO FAMILIES

WANDA BEGINS WITH HOME-BASED INSTRUCTION

Wanda lives in a trailer at the end of a three-mile dirt road with her four children. She dropped out of school when she was fifteen to have her first child. Her two school-age children are enrolled in Title I programs and one child has some hearing loss in the right ear. He is waiting to receive a hearing aid. The youngest children are two and four years old. **Wanda has a difficult time helping her children with homework** and often accuses the teachers of asking her to do their work. Mona, the Even Start home instructor who works with Wanda's family, says there are not enough pots to catch the water dripping from the ceiling when it rains. Wanda does the best she can, living far from town with no car. Twice a month, her sister comes over to take the family to town to buy supplies. The family's main connection to the world is the television and Wanda's love of stories. She enjoys making up pretend tales to entertain the children. She agreed to be part of a home-based Even Start program because she gets lonely, and wants the children to "learn something" and have a better life.

Mona decides to discuss Wanda and her family at the next staff meeting so the **team can help her plan an integrated approach** to providing services. During the staff discussion, it becomes very clear to Mona that **Wanda's interests and needs are interrelated**. Wanda's desire to improve herself and to help her children could be the catalyst for addressing many of the concerns she has for her family. The staff recommend that Mona build the initial **adult literacy lessons** upon **Wanda's interest** in reading to her children. She could write her "pretend" tales and practice reading them to her children. The parent-child interaction time could include writing down the children's stories for school. The staff suggest that Mona talk to Wanda about what to expect at parent-teacher conferences at school so that Wanda will understand what her children are learning. Mona should use every opportunity that arises to **emphasize to Wanda the value of reading and writing for herself and her children**. Mona might ask Wanda what types of learning activities she would like to do with her children, and she can suggest things like a trip to the library if Wanda does not suggest it herself. Mona hopes to transition Wanda into the Center to involve her in discussions with peers about managing her children's behavior, decreasing television viewing, and other parenting issues. Mona also wants to get Wanda's youngest children involved in the early childhood education program at the Center. Wanda might want to come to the Center's classes after meeting other parents and seeing first-hand what is available for her children there.

Mona began developing a **family action plan** with Wanda during the next home visit. **Wanda identified three goals** she wanted for herself and her children. As next steps, Mona and Wanda identified a long list of resources she would need to accomplish her goals: money to buy a car, a driver's license, job training and a job, a library card, better reading skills, and the self-confidence that she can do this. So Wanda began to prioritize the things she needed to do first: learn to read better, explore job options, ask her sister about watching the kids. Mona skillfully **incorporated interactive literacy and parenting activities** that related to Wanda's goals into the weekly

Even Start instructional home visits. She also guided her through problem-solving exercises to explore solutions to some of her needs, such as transportation and housing. Mona let Wanda use her laptop computer to practice writing her stories and printing pages so the children could illustrate them. Wanda was amazed how easy it was! Mona also suggested that Wanda call her church or volunteer groups to ask about free transportation to the library and to the school. To start her **community outreach**, Wanda decided to call the welfare office to see if there were funds to evaluate her son's hearing loss. As she began to see **evidence of her accomplishments**, Wanda became very excited about her future. She agreed to bring the children to the "Family Fun Day" at the Center. Each child selected a favorite "homemade" book to bring. They loved the attention and praise they received from everyone.

CLAUDET ATTENDS CENTER-BASED ADULT LITERACY INSTRUCTION

An Even Start program in a rural area offers the adult education component both at the Even Start Center, located in the elementary school, and through the home-based instruction program, which offers an **individualized adult learning curriculum**. One of the students, Claudet, a married mother of four, is finishing her second year with Even Start. She dropped out of school in the tenth grade following the birth of her first child. Her main goal when she enrolled in Even Start was to be able to read "chapter books," not just picture books, to her children. She now has two children in grade school and she wants to help them learn. She feels this will encourage them to finish high school. She said she is **embarrassed that she cannot read well**, especially when she is out in public. For example, she cannot read all the words on food labels to buy "good" food for her children and feels "ripped off" at fast food restaurants because she cannot figure out if she gets the correct change. The friend who initially brought Claudet to Even Start has already gotten her general equivalency diploma and is starting a job. Claudet said she may **want to get a job** when her children are older. She knows she does not have adequate skills to get a decent paying job now. When she entered the program, her **short term goals** were to get a library card so she could get books to practice reading to her children, learn how to help her children with their homework, and improve her basic math skills.

Initially, Claudet received adult education instruction at home, but **made the choice** to come to the Center with her two youngest children. One incentive for this was that **transportation was provided** by Even Start. Claudet admitted that she was afraid to come to the Center's adult education program, but decided to try it because "all the staff who have visited me at home are so friendly and encouraging." She is finding that her children love their classes at the Center, and that she can set up a **class schedule** four days a week that **is flexible** and works around her family's schedule. She also likes that the staff remind her about special events and call her if she misses classes because it shows they care.

Although the whole family enjoys the interactive literacy activities and early childhood program, Claudet is **afraid of being tested** for her adult education classes at the Center. She is comfortable with the parenting sessions, since she feels she is a good parent and enjoys talking with the other mothers. But school to her means reading textbooks, filling in workbooks and taking tests — which she has never done well. To her surprise, the first thing Claudet and her teacher did was to discuss what she wanted to learn and she completed a **self-evaluation**. Eventually, she was tested on her literacy and math skills, but she was comfortable with the teacher and understood the purpose of the testing so she was less nervous and fearful. Claudet is surprised that she and the other students read **real life materials**, like novels and magazines, and discuss **topics they want to learn about**, such as budgeting, family health concerns, and how to write a resume. She is amazed that she and the other students have similar feelings and desires, and she is eager to talk about her **life experiences** during class discussions. Claudet also enjoys listening to the teacher read to the

class and often takes a tape recorder home so that she can listen to lessons on tape. She finds she **learns better by listening** and is really pleased with the progress she has made. Claudet told the staff that she feels her **adult education teacher** is very knowledgeable and teaches the material in a way that she understands. Claudet was particularly pleased to announce to the class that her husband just enrolled in the adult education classes offered at night to get his GED because he saw how positive she felt about Even Start.

Claudet is surprised by how much she likes **computers**. Her program has partnered with another Even Start program in the state and Claudet has a pen pal she keeps in touch with through e-mail. She is thrilled that she can take the Center's laptop home to do work with her children. She decided that getting a job working with computers might be a good **long-term goal**. At the end of her first year of classes, she received a Certificate of Improvement because she has **made significant progress** toward completing a level in the adult education course. Claudet constantly says, "This is not like going to school. I feel good coming to my Even Start school." Because she **feels more confident** about her skills, Claudet is volunteering in her oldest child's third grade classroom. She has already achieved one of her goals: learning how to help her children with their schoolwork.

LUANN AND HOSEA MAKE PROGRESS

Hosea and his mother will have many changes in their lives this fall. Hosea will **start kindergarten** and his mother, Luann, will **attend adult education and parenting classes** full-time at the Even Start center. They have really enjoyed the visits from the home instructor, and Luann feels she does many more literacy activities with Hosea on her own at home. But when they discussed the topic of transition during parenting class last semester, Luann was concerned and nervous about how both she and Hosea would adjust to being in school all day and separated from each other. The Even Start staff assured her that they helped families make changes like these, and that she would discuss **transition plans** for herself and Hosea with a staff member. Even Start has a committee that maintains contact with teachers, social workers, employers and others so that staff and families have the information they need to plan smooth transitions for family members. Talking about her concerns gave Luann reassurance about Hosea beginning kindergarten, and she began to get excited about spending more time at the Center for her adult studies and job training.

The Center already has several effective transition policies in place. For instance, **Even Start staff meet with the kindergarten teachers** each spring to discuss the children coming from the program and to focus on the needs and abilities of each child. They also exchange ideas about what worked and did not work programmatically for different children during the past year. They use this opportunity to set up **joint training** in early childhood development and curriculum planning for both staffs in the upcoming year.

Hosea was given the screening test for kindergarten at Even Start to see if he had any disabilities that required attention. The **staff explained all of the services** and special opportunities that the public schools offer for children and families to Luann. Luann now feels that she could ask for additional services for Hosea, if he needs them. Luann's home instructor encourages her to read books about going to school to Hosea, find or start a playgroup during the summer, and to talk about and emphasize all the positive things about school to prepare him. Hosea's Even Start **early childhood teacher** has already agreed to accompany Luann to the parent orientation at the public school in a few weeks. Hosea and his friends from the Center who are going to kindergarten together are scheduled to **visit the kindergarten class** with their Even Start teacher.

Luann received a **voucher for public transportation** to visit Hosea's new kindergarten classroom. She was told that these vouchers are available for any visits she would like to make to help out in the classroom during the school year. The school mailed her an information packet, which was printed in both **English and Spanish**. She was able to share it with Hosea's grandmother who only speaks and reads Spanish. At the parent orientation meeting, the teacher explains the developmental nature of the kindergarten program to Luann. She learns that a high level of **parent involvement** is welcomed and encouraged, and that her opinion of how Hosea is doing is very valuable to the teachers. There will be two scheduled parent-teacher conferences a year, and frequent **written correspondence and telephone contact** with parents. Hosea's Even Start teacher tells Luann that she would be happy to review the materials from school with her at any time. Luann will also visit Hosea each week in kindergarten as part of the **parent-child interaction time** with Even Start. She is very pleased about this.

As for her own "school schedule," Luann met with the adult education coordinator to discuss and choose her classes. She plans to take a mix of pre-GED classes and job training, to work toward her goal of being a teacher's aide. Maybe she can work in Hosea's school one day. Luann **arranged her schedule** at Even Start so she can accompany Hosea to school his first day. Luann is feeling much better about their "transitions into the future" this fall.



EVALUATION LEADS TO PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

The topic of this monthly Even Start staff meeting is evaluation – specifically, what the staff can do to **improve services** based on their program’s **evaluation data**. The program director, Lynn, and her staff are concerned about the unexpectedly disappointing results of their adult learners’ TABE scores (Test of Adult Basic Skills) compared with other programs in their state. They also compared the number of adult education hours their program participants receive with national Even Start data, and found that their participants receive fewer instructional hours than the average hours for adults in other programs. So they decide to track content hours more closely this year, which will require the cooperation of collaborating agencies.

The subject of **collaborators** brings up the whole issue of how well the current relationships are working. The staff at this meeting are from the two major Even Start partner agencies, which provide parenting and early childhood services. Most of the adult education services are provided by a collaborating agency. Lynn mentions that they need to expand their circle of collaborating agencies because the current agencies do not have the funds or service capability to handle the range of needs of enrolled families. The staff agree that more collaborators are needed. However, some of them bring up **problems with current cross-agency coordination** that they would like to discuss. The examples given are: (1) efforts to share information about and stay in contact with families are not reciprocated, and Even Start staff are not invited to other agencies’ meetings; (2) referrals from one particular agency are usually inappropriate, which suggests they do not understand the purpose of Even Start; (3) parents have complained that the adult education instructors do not use materials that relate to their goals or requests. Everyone agrees that these are problems that need to be addressed before additional collaborators are sought. Lynn suggests that they ask their **independent evaluator**, Jack, to include this issue in his upcoming annual **evaluation plan**.

In the past, Jack has helped Lynn and the staff to **assess the long-term family outcomes** of their participants and to clarify program direction. For this year’s evaluation, Jack plans to: (1) assess the extent to which adults in the Even Start program have met goals in their Family Action Plans; and (2) examine parenting outcomes, such as changes in educational expectations of children, parent-initiated contacts with schools, and understanding of children’s curricula and instructional content. After discussing the history of and staff’s concerns with the current collaborators, Jack summarizes what he hears as the crux of the matter: **the purpose of collaboration is to extend support services to families to meet the goal of comprehensive services for families**, and the weaknesses in the current system are preventing this from happening. Based on the problems the staff has described, Jack notes that some of their basic criteria for successful collaborations are: regular communication, knowledge of each other’s programs, and common philosophies and goals. Lynn asks him to **develop a plan to assess their collaboration** efforts.

Over a five-month period, Jack works with the staff of all the key agencies and **gets their feedback** on various aspects of collaboration. The **guiding questions** for the collaboration evaluation are: (1) How well do current collaborators understand the goals and operations of Even Start? (2) What are collaborators' degrees of satisfaction with their relationship with Even Start? (3) How compatible are collaborators' goals with Even Start goals? And have the goals of different programs grown closer as a result of the collaborative relationship? (4) What is needed to strengthen and improve collaborative relationships? Jack uses various approaches and instruments to **collect evaluation data**: focus groups, surveys, and follow-up interviews. The plan also addressed how the findings and recommendations would be presented, and it was agreed that Jack would make two presentations — one to the Even Start staff, and one to the collaborators' staffs. Then the administrators from each agency will decide how they want to proceed.

Soon after receiving the evaluation report, Lynn **meets with her colleagues** from the other agencies. Openly discussing the report and their individual perspectives on program services and participants reveals that, philosophically, they have **similar hopes for family outcomes**. But it is also obvious that the approaches reflected in their program designs and curricula are quite different, and most of the collaborators only concentrate on the family member that is their direct recipient or client. The administrators draw some immediate conclusions that echo the Even Start staff's original concerns: (1) the lack of knowledge and coordination among agencies is causing services to conflict with each other and/or gaps in services, (2) families are not always looked at holistically, so some staff are not familiar with whole families and their goals and activities, and (3) both of these factors result in a lack of appropriate and sufficient services being provided to families. The discussion turns to how these problems can be improved. Numerous ideas and suggestions — and, of course, potential obstacles or difficulties — are generated. Lynn suggests they categorize the suggestions and issues into those that can be addressed now and those that require some long-range planning. She would like to end the meeting with some concrete action steps related to the short-term solutions. Everyone agrees that the following immediate **steps will be taken to improve relationships and services**: (1) They will schedule a joint staff training day devoted to familiarizing everyone with each other's mission, program design and services, and client population. (2) The director and lead instructors from the adult education provider will meet with Lynn and her key staff to discuss how to improve the quantity and scheduling of adult education hours, and how they can integrate their instruction better based on family and adult learners' goals. (3) The core collaborators will figure out a way to exchange relevant participant information, and to share and create cross-agency staff training.

They have a lot of planning and work ahead of them to create a strong collaborative system, but Lynn feels optimistic as she leaves the meeting because she heard and saw her colleagues make the connection between the **quality of their services and the successful experiences of families** — and that it is mutually beneficial for everyone to work together on this. On that score, the evaluation process has already proved its worth.



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FAMILY LITERACY CORE VALUES: THE BIG PICTURE

This section begins with a brief discussion of seven essential values or themes that distinguish high quality family literacy programs. These values describe the “big picture” in Even Start. They are underlying principles for the design of high quality family literacy programs. The remainder of this section describes how these themes can be operationalized as quality indicators within and across program components.

Focus on Literacy

The improvement of literacy skills of family members is the primary focus of Even Start programs. Even Start programs target families who are most in need of services based upon low income, low level of literacy and other need-related factors, and who otherwise might not be reached or helped by other education programs. Literacy acquisition encompasses the four domains of language (reading, writing, speaking and listening) and numeracy. Literacy instruction should be woven into the activities of all program components, and presented and practiced in contexts that are meaningful to families’ lives and needs.

Family-centered Programming

As the primary stakeholders in Even Start programs, families are full partners in identifying their needs and priorities, shaping their goals, and making decisions about plans to achieve those goals. Program design is based on the needs, interests and goals of families. Even Start values the home and family unit as the most influential learning environment. Successful programs build on families’ strengths and celebrate their successes. Even Start is a safe and supportive place for families to grow and develop.

Intensity and Duration of Services

Even Start programs have high expectations for family involvement and commitment, and require that families participate fully in all program components. Programs encourage families to attend regularly and to remain in the program long enough to meet their long-term goals of academic improvement and self-sufficiency. The program is designed to provide services of the requisite intensity and duration to ensure that families can achieve such goals.

Flexibility and Adaptability

Successful Even Start programs fit services to families, not families to the program. Program services are tailored to meet the needs of individual families, both in content and the scheduling of services. Programs must remain flexible enough to recognize and accommodate the diverse interests and changing needs of families over time, including changes in support service needs (such as, transportation, child care and work demands). Programs also must respond to changing needs and populations in their communities.

Partnership of Families and Service Providers

Respect for the diverse languages, cultures, and life experiences of families is apparent in all aspects of program practice. Staff members view themselves as allies with other service providers in advocating for families within the larger community. Even Start staff work with families and other service providers to create and use social and resource support networks in the community.

Continuity of Messages and Services

Quality programs are characterized by research-based approaches, consistent values and curricula that are compatible across Even Start components and collaborating programs. The goal of Even Start programs is to provide seamless services for families through the many transitions that families will experience over time. To ensure continuity of services, Even Start administrators lead efforts to institutionalize family-centered approaches within the larger community of service providers.

New Roles and Relationships for Staff

Even Start programs require staff to operate in new ways and, thus, to provide cross-disciplinary and cross-agency training opportunities to support staff roles and responsibilities. The level of staff qualifications, experience and ongoing professional development are integral to the quality of programs. Staff from Even Start and collaborating agencies work together in the interests of their client families. This focus requires different types of relationships among service providers. Even Start places a high priority on developing truly collaborative relationships with key agencies to ensure comprehensive services for families.



PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

See section
on Program
Leadership and
Management for
other indicators
related to
Partnerships and
Collaborations.

CHALLENGE: To develop a strong partnership to operate the Even Start program and to form a network of service providers that, individually and collectively, take responsibility for providing and strengthening family literacy services.

EVEN START NOTE: It is important to distinguish between the many formal and informal agency relationships needed to implement a program, and the partnership agreement that constitutes the “eligible entity” that applies for an Even Start grant. Even Start programs apply for funding in partnerships of at least two organizational entities: one or more local educational agencies (LEAs) and one or more community-based organizations (CBOs), public agencies (non-LEA), institutions of higher education, or public or private nonprofit organizations of demonstrated quality. [Sections 1202(e)(1) and 1203(b)(1), ESEA.] The partners assume responsibility for the program’s compliance with legal requirements and proper use of federal funds, although they might not have equal management responsibilities. One partner, or the partnership as a whole, serves as the fiscal agent.

In this section, the following terms are used:

- The “**partnership**” and “**partners**” refer to the entities that are the legal Even Start grant recipients.
- “**Collaborators**” refers to agencies with whom the partnership has formal relationships for providing services.
- “**Program**” and “**program staff**” refer to local Even Start programs and their staffs (this is true throughout the Guide).

Quality Considerations

- 1 The partners **design the program** together and periodically review the effectiveness of strategies in meeting desired outcomes.
- 2 The **LEA** takes an **active role** in the partnership, meaning that the district’s central office staff and school principals are knowledgeable about and supportive of Even Start’s goals and services. The LEA values the role of Even Start in developing early reading skills; Even Start staff are included in district professional development and as part of the early reading team.
- 3 The partnership develops **relationships** with a **wide variety of agencies**. These relationships range in purpose from simple information exchange and coordination, to joint referrals for services, to providing core services on an ongoing basis. Throughout the life of the program, the partnership expands the circle of relationships with other agencies to meet the growing and changing needs of the program and families.

- 4 **Collaborations** are formed with **key agencies** that provide high-quality services which are directly related to Even Start's core program components. To fully sustain the literacy focus of the program, Even Start collaborates with multiple providers of early childhood and adult education services.
- 5 The program has written **agreements with collaborators** concerning the nature of the relationship and services to be rendered. Agreements might include: description of services, staff roles and designated contacts, fiscal arrangements and sources of funding, length of agreement and options for renewal, and communication mechanisms and expectations. The strongest relationships include clear benefits for both collaborators and the Even Start program as a result of working together.
- 6 **Cooperative relationships** are formed with agencies for referral, coordination and external support services in fields such as health, housing, social services, counseling, substance abuse, job training and placement, and transportation. This includes programs funded by federal and state legislation, such as Title I, Head Start, WIC (Women, Infants and Children), TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), WIA (Workforce Investment Act, which includes programs formerly funded by the Job Training Partnership Act), REA (Reading Excellence Act), and IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).
- 7 The program builds on and does **not duplicate high quality community services** that are meeting family needs. It does not build on low quality or inappropriate services. It expands upon, improves and fills gaps in services available from collaborators based on the needs of the families served.
- 8 An **administrative team** of representatives from partner and collaborating agencies meets regularly to ensure good communication and coordination of services.
- 9 The partners and collaborating agencies see collaboration as primarily **beneficial to families**; there are secondary benefits to the agencies themselves. They agree on mutual goals for families, including literacy goals.
- 10 The partners create a **governance or advisory board** that serves as a bridge and unifying force between the partners and collaborators, and the program and the community. This is a group of representatives from the partner agencies, collaborators and members of the community (for example, local government, religious community). The board is an informed, committed and objective group that provides advice and support for the Even Start program and its long-range plan for sustainability past the grant cycle.
- 11 The program recognizes that staff time is required to attend to building and maintaining collaborative relationships. **Communication** among agency staffs is frequent and staff visit each others' program sites.

- 12 Referrals** for the program come from collaborators and other agencies. Even Start families are also referred to collaborators for services. Even Start staff stay in touch with other agencies about families they have referred to ensure that they are participating and receiving adequate services.
- 13** The program and collaborators **share information about families** to improve and tailor services they receive. Confidentiality issues have been addressed; programs know what information can and cannot be shared.
- 14** The program and collaborators work together to **minimize barriers to participation** in services. For example, the program and collaborators standardize some of their procedures, including developing common terminology and definitions of eligible clients.
- 15** The program offers **training as an incentive** for collaborators. All collaborators receive training in family literacy philosophy and approaches, and collaborating staff train together when possible to build “buy in” to Even Start approaches.
- 16** Ownership in the **relationship with collaborators** is built at all levels. Staff are well informed about the roles and missions of the collaborators. Staff also know each other’s constraints. Staff express an attitude of respect for collaborators and their contributions, and are willing to work together to solve problems that arise.
- 17** Some Even Start staff have **“boundary-crossing” roles** with collaborating agencies; for example, adult education instructors work with early childhood staff to plan home-based parent-child literacy activities.
- 18** Collaborators have a role in identifying outcomes for local evaluation and an interest in **evaluation results**. Collaborating agencies cooperate with data collection, as needed. Even Start local evaluation addresses successes of and improvements in collaborations.
- 19 Families have a role** in identifying possible collaborators. Families are encouraged to select resources that are most appropriate for them.
- 20** The partners assume joint responsibility for developing and implementing a **continuous improvement plan** for program design and services.
- 21** The partners assume joint responsibility for developing a long-range **continuation plan** for the program by the second year of the grant cycle to ensure continued funding after the grant ends.



SIGNS OF PROBLEMS WITH PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

- 1** The program fears loss of identity or threats of competition for resources from collaborators.
- 2** There are obvious omissions of relationships with programs serving similar populations.
- 3** Even Start duplicates existing services in the community.
- 4** Key staff of partners (for example, school principals) are not aware that they are connected to Even Start or have little understanding of the program.
- 5** Collaborations are limited to referral and access only (for example, simple sharing of information).
- 6** There are no changes in service delivery to families that are attributable to the efforts of collaboration.
- 7** Collaborators and Even Start staff do not understand each other's program goals and requirements.
- 8** Collaborators often refer inappropriate families to Even Start.
- 9** Partners and collaborators cite lack of common procedures, definitions and regulations, and bureaucratic problems as primary barriers to working together.
- 10** There is no evidence of resource sharing with collaborators.
- 11** Partners are not clear about what each collaborating program offers. Common goals have not been discussed. Collaborators and partners have different goals for families.
- 12** No cross-agency staff training has occurred.
- 13** Collaborators have not altered the literacy level and content of their materials for Even Start families.
- 14** The majority of collaborators sever their relationship with the program. Collaborators complain there are few benefits for their agencies and clients or improvements in their services.
- 15** There is no plan for continuation of the program beyond receipt of federal funding.



PROGRAM LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

CHALLENGE: To provide leadership and direction for the Even Start program, and to employ management strategies that ensure that the program operates smoothly and can achieve its goals. The leadership maintains a vision of improving literacy for children and adults, and ensures that this vision is reflected in daily program practice.

EVEN START NOTE: The Even Start partnership helps to define the management structure of the program. A variety of administrative arrangements is possible, including variations in the degree to which the program is directed by an individual or by an administrative team, and the degree to which management functions are distributed among staff members.

In this section, the following terms are used:

- The “**partnership**” and “**partners**” refer to the entities that are the legal Even Start grant recipients.
 - “**Collaborators**” refers to agencies with whom the partnership has formal relationships for providing services.
 - “**Leadership**” refers to the partners and any administrators vested with the authority to shape, govern and direct the program. This may include the influence of a governing or advisory board.
 - “**Program administrators**” are Even Start staff who are responsible for managing the program on a daily basis (the lead administrator is often called the “**coordinator**”).
- “**Program**” and “**program staff**” refer to local Even Start programs and their staffs.

Quality Considerations

- 1 The leadership has an articulated **vision of family literacy** for the program and the role of the community in supporting this vision.
- 2 Program administrators’ management styles foster **shared decision-making** and team-building that involve partners, collaborators, staff, and parents. Staff and program participants feel their ideas are listened to and valued.
- 3 Program administrators implement a **management and accountability system** that allows them to measure program effectiveness and outcomes.
- 4 Program administrators have, at a minimum, **Bachelor’s degrees and professional experience** in one or more of the Even Start component areas of family literacy (for example, early childhood education, adult education). Administrators have or obtain training in comprehensive family literacy services and program management.

- 5 Program administrators actively **recruit staff** with strong credentials and experience in family literacy and related fields. High priority is placed on candidates who have similar cultural and language backgrounds to the majority of program participants. Instructional staff who are paid by Even Start as of the year 2000 have or are working toward obtaining certification or a college degree in fields related to early childhood, elementary or secondary, or adult education by 2004. Instructional staff hired after December 22, 2000 must have such a degree and/or certification.
- 6 **Paraprofessionals** who provide support for academic instruction **are supervised by professional staff** and have, at a minimum, a high school diploma or its equivalent. Staff with Master's degrees in early childhood education are available to instructional staff for consultation.
- 7 The program has a written **staffing plan** that includes job descriptions and expectations for each position, including required credentials or licenses, and desired personal qualities. The plan includes a long-range view of staffing patterns to enhance consistency, continuity and quality of services.
- 8 There is a staff **supervision and support plan** that is understood by all staff members. The plan includes policies for addressing staff concerns, and a process for periodic reviews of job performance, salary and professional development plans. Program administrators also support staff in setting boundaries in relationships with families.
- 9 The program complies with state and local **licensure requirements** for staffing and physical program settings.
- 10 The program has an **orientation** for all new staff that fully describes family literacy and the goals, philosophy and operations of the program. The orientation includes a summary of participating families' strengths and needs.
- 11 Program administrators are attentive to the **working conditions** of staff, recognizing the value of retaining qualified staff. Recognition of staff's expertise and appreciation for staff can be shown through: (1) salary scales and equity (based on credentials and experience, comparable to other professionals, and competitive with local salaries for similar work), (2) benefits, (3) professional development opportunities, and (4) reasonable caseloads.
- 12 The leadership recognizes that maintaining high quality staff and services requires **sufficient monetary resources**. Program administrators establish and maintain an appropriate size caseload based on available resources. To fully and intensively serve families' needs, many Even Start programs limit the number of participants to approximately 20 or fewer families in small programs and 30 to 50 families in mid-size or large programs at any given time (in other words, taking into account newly-enrolled and exiting families).

- 13 Program administrators **manage budget** resources on behalf of the partnership, including preparing an annual realistic budget, approving expenditures (and ensuring records are kept for both cash and matching resources expenditures), monitoring the budget status monthly, and filing necessary reports for continued federal funding.
- 14 Partners and administrators **explore** ways to combine, expand and allocate **resources** to improve the quality of the collaboration; for example, sharing or co-funding staff positions, sharing space, materials and equipment, applying for project grants as agency teams.
- 15 Program administrators establish and maintain a system of **internal communication** to ensure that staff, including staff of collaborating agencies, and families are aware of program events, pertinent family literacy news, and support services. Staff and parents feel they know what is going on in the program, and what opportunities are available to them. A variety of communication strategies is used, including regular meetings of staff and collaborators, and postings of materials in accessible locations.
- 16 Program administrators establish and maintain a system of **external communication** designed to give the program **visibility in the community** and to build support for the program. Examples of external communication strategies include distributing a newsletter, participating in community events, and public service announcements.
- 17 Program administrators take responsibility for **connecting the program** to the wider field of family literacy. For example, they participate in state and national meetings and conferences related to family literacy and the fields represented by Even Start, and take advantage of relevant information and publications available from national organizations.
- 18 The leadership seeks **feedback from families and staff** both formally and informally. Program administrators provide opportunities for the leadership to have direct contact with families and staff, observe program activities, review progress data, and participate in the annual program evaluation.
- 19 The partnership ensures that the program has a data collection plan that complies with **state and federal reporting** requirements, and takes responsibility for the completeness and accuracy of information in reports.
- 20 Partners and administrators work with an independent **local evaluator** to design and conduct an **annual program evaluation**. The evaluation tools and process are designed to allow for ongoing assessment of progress and comparisons of progress over time. Staff and collaborators participate in shaping the questions addressed in the evaluation, which should include a means of evaluating the quality of collaborators' services. The annual evaluation, at a minimum, summarizes participant progress on desired outcomes and addresses implementation and integration of program components, with recommendations for improvement.

- 21** Program administrators periodically engage staff and collaborators in reflection on the **effectiveness of the program model** based upon data from the project's local evaluation, and development of new strategies to achieve the desired outcomes for participants. There is special attention to the quality and intensity of literacy instruction.
- 22** The leadership has developed a realistic **plan to sustain services** after the grant ends. The plan is developed with the governing or advisory board and collaborators, and includes expanding connections and support in the community.



SIGNS OF PROBLEMS WITH PROGRAM LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- 1** One of the partners has assumed all decision-making powers, including those affecting program design, funding, and staff selection.
- 2** The program adopts the existing power structure of the lead partner agency, even if it does not serve the purposes of Even Start.
- 3** “Silent” partners are involved in securing the program grant, but not in the governance.
- 4** Program administrators and/or staff lack experience with the target population.
- 5** There is a high turnover of staff and participants, and staff experience “burnout.”
- 6** Partners and collaborators are consistently late, default on, or provide inaccurate reporting and financial data.
- 7** Program administrators do not have control over the budget.
- 8** Program expenditures are far behind schedule for estimated budget and work plan, or the fiscal agent does not disburse funds in a timely fashion.
- 9** The progress of participants cannot be assessed because collaborators do not provide the necessary data.
- 10** Staff have not observed collaborators’ programs so they have no first-hand knowledge of the quality of those services.
- 11** Program administrators take no responsibility for the quality of collaborators’ services.
- 12** There is a lack of teamwork among staff or training in team building. Staff see their roles as separate from each other — for example, an adult basic education teacher does not think of him or herself as a family educator.
- 13** Staff do not believe that families can reach their goals and the program can be successful in achieving planned outcomes.
- 14** Staffing pattern has not changed in response to demographic changes in families served, i.e., no staff members have language backgrounds similar to the majority of participants.
- 15** There is no connection between the program and local schools where Even Start children attend school.
- 16** The leadership and staff cannot articulate the vision of the program.
- 17** The leadership has not promoted the program to the community-at-large and made the case for family literacy as a means of creating overall societal improvement.





INTEGRATION OF INSTRUCTION WITHIN PROGRAM COMPONENTS

CHALLENGE: To connect instruction within and across components through meaningful and consistent program messages and planning, and to have service providers work with the whole family, thereby providing an intensive experience intended to change intergenerational patterns associated with low levels of literacy.

EVEN START NOTE: The Even Start legislation requires programs to provide integrated family literacy services. [Section 1201, 1204, and 14101(15), ESEA.] Integration is one of the most difficult concepts associated with family literacy and holistic service approaches. It may include, but should not be confused with, “thematic planning” — choosing a topic to be taught in all components and simply varying instruction per age group and skill level. **The purpose of integrating components is to ensure that families receive consistent and reinforced messages about the value of education and learning from all staff.**

Integration of instruction within and across components ensures that, for each family member, learning in a variety of situations and mastery of new information and skills is thorough and complete.

Even Start services are comprehensive, and the expectation is that all participants will actively and consistently participate in all program components:

- Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children.
- Training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children.
- Adult education and training that leads to personal growth and economic self-sufficiency.
- Age-appropriate education for children to prepare them for success in school and in life.

Even Start program models vary widely. Most combine center-based and home-based services, and research shows that predominantly home-based programs are more effective when they have some center-based services. Some programs combine the services of different providers and operate in various locations. In other cases, a single provider offers all component services in a single location. Single or adjacent location of services facilitates integration. However, Even Start programs must build on existing high-quality educational services, combining and enhancing them with other community services to meet families’ needs. If component services are delivered by multiple providers at various sites, integration is more difficult and will require greater planning and collaboration.

Quality Considerations

- 1 All program components employ a **holistic approach to serving families**; that is, activities and instructional plans are based on needs, goals and interests of families rather than relying on packaged materials without tailoring them to meet different, individualized needs.

- 2 The program has identified **common messages** that are emphasized across instructional components, for example: the value of education for success in life, high expectations for families, the central role of the parent in a child's development, the importance of applying and transferring skills, the identification of individual strengths, and the value of experiential learning. Staff can articulate these common messages to each other, to families, and to the community.
- 3 Staff from all program components know all members of each family, and see integration as an effective **instructional strategy** that is essential to achieving the desired **intensity of services** for families.
- 4 The program makes **specific connections** across program components, for example:
 - a. Family events and activities are inclusive of all family members (for example, older children, grandparents).
 - b. Home-based instruction provides an opportunity to practice what is discussed during parenting education; in other words, it is a time for active learning and application of new information. Parenting education addresses issues that arise during home-based instruction and in families' lives outside the program.
 - c. Some adult literacy skills are taught in the context of early childhood development, parenting education, and home visit activities.
 - d. Home instructors meet regularly with center-based early childhood and adult education staff to plan activities for families.
- 5 Program leadership and collaborators foster and support integration of components by providing adequate, paid planning time and **joint staff development**. Cross-component **staff teams meet regularly** to discuss and design integrated instructional plans.
- 6 The program's management structure is designed to facilitate integration of components. An **interdisciplinary approach** is used to plan the curriculum for each component, including making connections among themes, content and instructional and learner strategies.
- 7 The program continues to work on integration of services with local schools when children are enrolled in **elementary school**.



SIGNS OF PROBLEMS WITH INTEGRATION

- 1** Administrative activities and program schedule do not include regular planning time for staff teams.
- 2** Staff consider the Even Start team to include only those staff paid by Even Start, and do not include other service providers (for example, adult education staff) in curriculum planning and professional development.
- 3** Staff do not view integration with other components as their job. Individual staff prefer to follow their own curricular ideas and plans.
- 4** Program staff define integration as simply having all program components work on the same theme on the same day.
- 5** One or more program components relies solely on commercial, packaged materials with out adaptations.
- 6** Collaborators who provide direct services are not trained in family literacy.
- 7** There have been no cross-training opportunities among different component staff and agencies.
- 8** Inter-visitations of classrooms by program staff are rare.
- 9** Parents cannot describe the connections across information they learn in different program components.
- 10** Parents get different or mixed messages about the value of education and the importance of their roles in shaping the learning environment at home from different service providers.





RECRUITMENT

CHALLENGE: To reach and recruit those families most in need, specifically low-income, disadvantaged families with low literacy skills, including those with limited English proficiency.

EVEN START NOTE: Even Start program law requires programs to identify, recruit and serve families with the greatest need for Even Start services, as indicated by low income, level of literacy and English language proficiency of the eligible parents. In competitions, priority is given to projects planning to operate in areas with the highest concentrations of poverty or in empowerment zones or enterprise communities. Other need-related indicators also may be considered, such as disabling conditions, homelessness, or chronic unemployment. [Section 1205(1) and (14), ESEA.] To be eligible, families must have at least one eligible parent and one eligible child. Teen parents are eligible to participate if: they are within the state's compulsory attendance age range; they are among those most in need and; the LEA provides or ensures the required basic education component. Teen parents over the compulsory school age range are eligible if they are attending school or qualify for services under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. [Section 1206(a)(1), ESEA.] Programs are required to serve at least a three-year age range of children, which may begin at birth and extend through age seven, and are encouraged to serve the full eligible age range. Children over age seven may participate in the program if the local project collaborates with a program under Title 1, Part A and Title 1, Part A funds contribute to the cost of providing Even Start services to those children, as long as the program continues to focus on families with young children. [Section 1206(b)(3), ESEA.]

Quality Considerations

- 1 Recruitment targets families who are **most in need of literacy services** as determined by **low income and low level of literacy**, and other need-based indicators. These are also families who do not have access to and cannot afford services. For English language learners, eligibility should also be determined by their literacy needs based on limited English proficiency.
- 2 The **key message** to target populations is that Even Start is a family-centered, long-term program that focuses on literacy. Recruitment messages also highlight what the program can do for the **whole family**, and emphasize that program curricula and activities are based on family members' goals and needs.
- 3 The program uses **multiple methods and sources** for recruitment, including written materials, public service announcements, and personal contacts made through a variety of strategies (for example, speaking at community meetings, visiting schools, operating booths or tables at public events).
- 4 Written materials are composed in the **languages and literacy levels** of the populations that the program serves and is targeting. Visual design includes graphics, large print and color to convey key messages. Materials are distributed and posted in **high visibility and high traffic** locations frequented by the target populations (for example, laundromats, and grocery, convenience and department stores).
- 5 Current and past **program participants** have an important and planned role in recruiting parents, especially for making personal contacts.

- 6 Recruitment strategies and messages reflect the **cultural diversity** of the community and the target families. Recruitment methods take cultural values and practices into account (for example, how and who in the family is contacted, roles of different family members).
- 7 Recruitment is **proactive**, especially in areas of high poverty. In other words, likely participants are sought out and encouraged to enroll. Repeated and varied types of contact are made to encourage participation, if necessary. Programs recognize the preparation time it may take to recruit some families, and the importance of using well-known community contacts and leaders to talk with families.
- 8 The program provides **clear messages about expectations** for participation so parents have ample knowledge to help them make the commitment to enroll. Anticipated barriers to the family's full participation in the program are addressed during the recruitment process (for example, transportation, child care). Solutions to participation barriers are sought before the family begins participation.
- 9 The program has written policies for its **selection criteria and process**, including how criteria are weighted and ranked, which are available to all staff, parents, and collaborators. In addition to level of adult literacy, family income, and employment status, criteria may include information concerning family history, stresses and health, and other pressing family needs, which may come from referring agencies.
- 10 The **pre-enrollment process** is made as easy and comfortable as possible for families (for example, information is gathered in the home).
- 11 The program conducts an **orientation** for pre-enrolled families to: describe all program components and services, emphasize expectation of full and extended participation by family members, and elicit feedback and answer participants' questions. The program has a policy concerning attendance/absences and continuing eligibility, which is also covered during orientation.
- 12 Programs that have **waiting lists** of families stay in contact with them and have an auxiliary plan to provide partial services to family members (for example, home-based instruction). If the waiting period is lengthy, families are enrolled in programs with partner or collaborating agencies so that they receive some services while waiting.
- 13 **Recruitment is everyone's job.** All program staff and collaborators know the eligibility criteria and which populations are targeted for the program, and receive some guidance or training in how to recruit effectively. The program has reciprocal relationships with collaborators and other agencies for recruitment and referral.
- 14 **Recruitment is ongoing.** The program recognizes that different levels of intensity for recruitment are required at different stages in program development. The program monitors changes in community demographics, unemployment rate and other factors, and reviews recruitment strategies regularly.



SIGNS OF PROBLEMS WITH RECRUITMENT

- 1** The program spends no resources on and does not have a recruitment plan.
- 2** Staff describe most parents as people who “come to us,” and see no need to recruit.
- 3** Selection criteria have been added to the federal and state requirements that limit the eligibility of high-needs families.
- 4** The program avoids active recruitment in high-poverty areas.
- 5** Recruitment messages suggest that low literacy and inadequate parenting skills are characteristics of a particular population, i.e., one ethnic or racial group.
- 6** The recruitment process is formal and based on written applications; it lacks a variety of strategies and use of personal contact.
- 7** Recruitment is a one-time, annual event, rather than an ongoing process.
- 8** The program does not use parents and collaborators in an active way for recruitment.
- 9** A profile of families in the program shows that those most in need have not been recruited: (1) adults’ initial literacy skills and test scores are high on the average for the area (for example, high school level and above); (2) education and income statistics are high on the average for the area.
- 10** In any 12-month period, the turnover of families in the program is over 50 percent.
- 11** Families who drop out of the program say they were not aware of expectations, and the requirement to participate in all program components upon entry.
- 12** Most English as a Second Language participants have the equivalent of a high school diploma or higher education levels.





RETENTION OF FAMILIES

Many of the indicators in other sections also relate to Retention.

CHALLENGE: To keep families participating in the program long enough for them to achieve significant learning goals, make improvements in parenting skills, and increase their economic self-sufficiency.

EVEN START NOTE: The Even Start program is designed to facilitate the development of significant literacy skills in families who are most in need of literacy services and support. If goals related to literacy improvement are not part of a family's overall goals, it will be difficult to retain them in the program and they may be better served in another type of program. Many Even Start participants need to remain in the program for one to two years to make substantial progress. Programs must encourage participating families to attend regularly and to remain in the program a sufficient time to meet their goals. [Section 1205(11), ESEA.]

Quality Considerations

- 1 Enrolled families begin participation with a **period of preparation**. This is, typically, a one to three month intake program with planned activities that covers the following: program services, attendance and continuing eligibility policies, family needs assessment, literacy skills assessment, and goal setting. Through individual and group discussions, staff and families identify: positive reasons for participation, barriers to participation and solutions to barriers, expectations of each other, and outcomes of participation. Families may observe the program in action to gain familiarity and lessen any apprehension they may feel. It is essential that **families understand the level of commitment** necessary to gain benefits from the program. Programs may ask parents to sign "commitment contracts" and to renew those contracts annually. The period of preparation may also result in a family being referred to more appropriate programs or services.
- 2 The program has **written policies** concerning **enrollment, attendance and continuing eligibility** that are designed to enhance participation, and include strategies to deal with family crises and barriers that affect participation. The program also recognizes that "enrollment" may be defined differently in other programs providing collaborating services (for example, Head Start, adult education).
- 3 All families participate in **all core components** (adult, early childhood and parenting education, and parent-child interactive literacy activities) and in home-based literacy instruction. The program directly addresses problems with participants who are frequently absent and/or reluctant to participate in certain activities.
- 4 The program has written **exit policies** that cover a variety of circumstances, for example: attainment of goals or graduation from the program, leave of absence (for example, for a family crisis or health condition), chronic absenteeism, and unacceptable or disruptive personal behavior.

- 5 The program provides and families participate in **continuous services**, including some instructional services during the summer months, although the format of services may change (for example, home-based instruction may increase if center-based services are not operating for a period of time).
- 6 Most families stay in the program long enough to **meet significant goals** they have set. Staff work with families to set attainable, meaningful goals for children and adults. Appropriate benchmarks of goal attainment and improvement in literacy, parenting and self-sufficiency are identified. **Parents** participate in **identifying incentives** and recognition for their persistence and goal attainment, and successes are celebrated.
- 7 The program demonstrates **respect for families** by building on their strengths and interests, recognizing family and cultural traditions and values, and addressing families' critical needs. Program **staff** or adjunct staff reflect the ethnic **diversity** and language backgrounds of the participating families.
- 8 Improving the **self-esteem of participants** is recognized as essential to motivation and persistence and is supported in the program, especially through giving parents leadership roles and responsibility for planning some program and peer activities.
- 9 Staff address some of parents' **needs and interests** by making referrals to appropriate agencies and providing outside resources.
- 10 The program structure, schedule and curricula **encourage individualization** of services for families. For example, staff meet regularly to discuss each family's progress and needs and to adjust services as necessary. The program matches the level of service intensity to the degree of family need.
- 11 The delivery of program services is **flexible and convenient** for families. Delivery strategies are adapted to meet changing family needs on an on-going basis. For example, more home-based services, might be necessary for families with new babies, and parent and child literacy activities may be conducted at home or in neighborhood clusters, as well as in center-based settings. The program schedules activities during evenings and weekends to accommodate working parents, and there is some redundancy or repetition built into the schedule of offerings to enhance access.
- 12 The program collaborates with local social service agencies to ensure that Even Start participation is regarded as an **eligible work and/or education activity** under welfare reform, to the extent possible within state law.
- 13 The program sponsors activities for both parents and the whole family that encourage social interaction and the formation of relationships among participants, recognizing the importance of **peer support**.

- 14 The program frequently showcases success of current and past program participants and invites back **successful graduates** to motivate or mentor participants.
- 15 The program demonstrates **high expectations** for the **self-sufficiency** of families by giving parents responsibilities within the program or agency, arranging job or volunteer opportunities at local businesses, schools and community agencies, and using program graduates and other appropriate adults as mentors for participants.
- 16 The program **maintains contact with families** during occasional or planned absences. If a participant is unexpectedly absent, staff follow up to find out what happened. If a family drops out temporarily for personal reasons, the program periodically contacts the family. Home-based literacy instruction is increased and used to maintain continuity during times when parents are not able to attend center-based programming.
- 17 **Services continue** to be available to other eligible family members when a child or parent completes the program, or when a family member is temporarily absent from the program. A child or parent who completes the program continues to participate in appropriate activities, such as parenting education, until all family members are no longer eligible. If a whole family is on a temporary leave of absence from the program, there is a plan for transition back into the program when the family is ready to return.
- 18 The program conducts **ongoing assessment** of its services (for example, using local evaluation results) to determine patterns of retention that will inform changes in service delivery to ensure that participant needs are being addressed.



SIGNS OF PROBLEMS WITH RETENTION

- 1** Family participation is uneven across the components (for example, some parents may attend parent support groups regularly but not participate in adult literacy).
- 2** There are a number of families on active lists who receive no services.
- 3** Staff are not clear about the definition of enrollment or the enrollment status of a number of families.
- 4** The annual drop-out rate for newly-enrolled families is 50 percent or higher.
- 5** Program loses participants over the summer months.
- 6** There is little or no effort to contact families who have repeated absences to find out what is happening.
- 7** There are no policies or guidance on how to deal with families who do not participate in all components or who attend the program sporadically.
- 8** Parents are not achieving specific goals because goals are not clear, goals are too ambitious or unrealistic, or program activities do not connect to goals.
- 9** Parents have not developed close relationships with peers in the program. Among both staff and families, a sense of community has not developed.
- 10** The program is not meaningful to participants' lives; they cannot describe why they are participating.
- 11** Program components have limited availability in terms of scheduled offerings.
- 12** Support services (for example, transportation, child care, counseling) are not available, limited or tenuous.
- 13** Staff are not fully aware of families' needs and interests.
- 14** Program administrators and staff do not regularly re-examine or alter, as necessary, the service delivery model in response to changes in welfare reform legislation, local population and families' needs, or data obtained from the local evaluation.



STAFF DEVELOPMENT

CHALLENGE: To improve the skills of Even Start staff and staff from collaborating agencies to work effectively with participating families, and to plan and execute research-based program activities that support the achievement of family goals.

EVEN START NOTE: Staff development is required by the Even Start legislation, and is an important part of good program management and improvement, and the delivery of high-quality services. The legislation requires that staff whose salaries are paid partially or totally with Federal Even Start funds have certain qualifications, including that the majority of instructional staff have obtained an associate's, bachelor's or graduate degree in appropriate fields and meet any applicable state qualifications by December 21, 2004. New instructional staff must meet these qualifications when hired. [Section 1205(5), ESEA.] Through specialized training and the attainment of degrees and certifications, Even Start staff should be able to ascend a career ladder that is supported and recognized by the program.

See section on
Program
Leadership and
Management for
other indicators
related to Staff
Development.

Quality Considerations

- 1 **Staff** share certain **characteristics**: they are flexible team players who see themselves as lifelong learners and advocates for the cause of family literacy. They are capable and desirous of working with the most-in-need families served by Even Start.
- 2 Staff development is explicitly **connected** to the **goals of Even Start**. The program provides training to all staff in the Even Start family literacy model and family literacy philosophies.
- 3 Staff development is **systematic and ongoing**. There is a written plan that includes a budget and benchmarks for staff participation and enhanced skills (for example, number of credit hours or workshops offered, minimum number of hours of continuing education required, attendance, percentage who receive certifications or degrees). The plan also includes professional development goals for individual staff members and the program as a whole.
- 4 Staff development includes approaches grounded in **research**, including scientifically-based reading research, and the **application of practices** in real situations. Training activities build on the knowledge and skills of participating staff.
- 5 Staff **identify training needs** and are involved in planning training. Training needs are also suggested by information gathered from collaborating agencies, parents, evaluation results, community needs assessments and legislative changes.
- 6 The program itself is a **learning environment**. There is a continuous sharing of knowledge and skills among staff, and there are opportunities to reflect on the effectiveness of the Even Start

program based on local evaluation results and in the greater context of community needs.

Administrators and staff encourage a **variety of learning approaches**, including self-directed and inquiry-based learning, mentoring, action research, and peer modeling and coaching.

- 7 Training for early childhood** staff includes principles of child development and curricular guidance in all domains, with special emphasis on language development and early reading. **Training for adult education** staff includes adult learning principles and teaching methods that address basic literacy skills, learning disabilities and situated learning (in other words, learning in context). **Training for parenting education** staff includes principles of child development, interactive literacy development, cultural diversity, and working with schools and community resources.
- 8** Most staff development topics concern **improving instruction** or **enhancing relationships** with families. To enhance relationships with families, some staff activities address cultural issues and communication skills, especially related to different beliefs, perceptions and attitudes among staff and participants, and include discussions or workshops with parents. Staff development includes attention to a **strengths-based approach** to family development, focusing on identifying and building from what a family does well.
- 9** Staff development addresses ways to **integrate instruction across components**, and includes **cross-training** in the disciplines involved in Even Start programs (for example, adult educators are trained in early childhood along with early childhood staff and vice versa). Training also addresses team-building for staff, and cultural awareness and family dynamics concerning participants.
- 10** Some staff development activities are designed to **motivate staff** by recognizing their contributions personally and professionally, and to promote positive attitudes and teamwork.
- 11** Trainers have appropriate **knowledge and experience** in the content areas for which they are providing instruction. Content is current and based on sound research and practice, including available scientifically-based reading research.
- 12** Staff development includes participants from **collaborating agencies**, including public school staff, and training takes place at multiple sites.
- 13** The program provides **incentives** for participating in staff development, including paid time, transportation as required, and advancement potential. Scheduling permits all staff, including part-time staff, to participate in staff development activities.
- 14 Evaluations** of staff development activities address benefits and applications to practice, not simply satisfaction level.



SIGNS OF PROBLEMS WITH STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- 1** Existing staff who are required to participate in certification and degree programs are not doing so.
- 2** New staff do not meet statutory qualification requirements.
- 3** Attendance is chronically low at staff development activities.
- 4** Staff development is not responsive to staff's needs, and staff do not see the connection between training activities and immediate or future on-the-job needs.
- 5** Staff development activities are discrete and unconnected.
- 6** There is no budget for staff development.
- 7** Training is delivered predominantly through text or fact-based, large group instruction.
- 8** All staff development is conducted by program staff members, and does not take advantage of outside experts and practitioners, and vice versa.
- 9** Staff development is available for selected staff members only.
- 10** Administrative staff do not participate in training.
- 11** Scheduling does not allow all staff to attend.
- 12** Staff from collaborating agencies do not participate in joint trainings and learning activities.
- 13** Evaluations of staff development activities are negative, but nothing is done to change or improve them.
- 14** There is no overall assessment of the effectiveness of staff development efforts.
- 15** The staff development plan is not connected to program improvement goals.





EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

CHALLENGE: To provide a strong foundation for success in school for children from the families enrolled in Even Start by enhancing their cognitive and language development in developmentally appropriate settings.

EVEN START NOTE: Families with children from age birth through seven are eligible to participate in Even Start if a parent is eligible. [Section 1206, ESEA.] After the youngest child reaches the age of eight, a family may participate in Even Start for two more years until all participating parents are no longer eligible for adult basic education services under the Adult Education Act. [Section 1206(b), ESEA.] In addition, children over age seven may participate in the program if the local project collaborates with a program under Title I, Part A and Title I, Part A funds contribute to the cost of providing Even Start services to those children, as long as the program continues to focus on families with young children. [Section 1206(b)(3), ESEA.] **All children in Even Start, including school-age children, should receive literacy services as long as they are eligible because children's long-term success depends on consistent support of their development.** For school-age children, this implies services that go beyond classroom participation.

Quality Considerations

- 1 Early childhood **instructors and paraprofessionals are well-qualified**. They are trained in: child development; child observation and assessment; early literacy and language acquisition (including second language acquisition); curricula, environments and materials for young children; parent involvement; cultural diversity and special needs; and working with other staff. Instructional staff and teaching assistants who are paid by Even Start have or are working toward obtaining appropriate state **certification** for early childhood or a **college degree** in fields related to early childhood or elementary education. Paraprofessionals who provide support for academic instruction are supervised by professional staff and have, at a minimum, a high school diploma or its equivalent.
- 2 Early childhood centers have received appropriate **licensing** from the state.
- 3 Children participate in **sufficient hours** of appropriate early childhood education to produce learning outcomes, approximately 60 hours per month for 3 to 5 year olds. This includes educational and child development activities, such as instructional home visits and guided interaction between parents and children.
- 4 The physical **environment** is safe, clean, well-lighted, comfortable, and age-appropriate in terms of furniture, equipment, materials, and access to bathrooms and clean-up facilities. Space is arranged so that children can work individually, in small groups, and as a whole group.

- 5 The **adult-child ratio** allows for frequent interaction between children and adults. Adult-child ratios are consistent with state licensing standards, and allow each child to be known well by at least one adult. Children have sustained relationships with primary teachers/caregivers. The average tenure for staff is longer than one year.
- 6 At least some staff speak the **home language** of most children.
- 7 The early childhood program has the explicit goal of **supporting all domains** of development for all children.
- 8 The program's **curriculum** is grounded in solid research, and staff plan children's activities using the theoretical framework upon which the curriculum is based. The early childhood program has identified foundational concepts and specific skills that all children should learn. The curriculum allows children to work at different levels on different activities, is designed to achieve long-range goals for children, and relates to local and state school standards.
- 9 Staff encourage direct, first-hand, **interactive experiences** for learning. Staff recognize that children develop knowledge and skills through active experiences and social interactions. The real world is the subject of learning activities. Classroom activities are integrated and interdisciplinary, building on children's interests and knowledge.
- 10 There are many opportunities for **child-initiated** learning. Children's play is respected by staff as legitimate learning time. Children participate in planning their days and are aware of basic schedules and routines.
- 11 The center or classroom environment is **language-rich**. Staff read to children daily. Books and other reading and writing materials are abundant and accessible. The staff demonstrate many ways to encourage children to talk about their experiences and represent their ideas in stories and pictures. Vocabulary development is part of all learning activities.
- 12 Staff explicitly teach **phonological awareness** skills and frequently make **connections between speech and print**. Staff use rhyming, poetry, music and word play with sound clusters to build sensitivity to phonemic patterns. Staff teach skills associated with **conventions of print and literacy** (for example, bookhandling and following print on a page).
- 13 Staff encourage development of **reasoning and problem-solving** by providing challenging learning experiences, and through skillful questioning and suggestions for furthering activities. Staff develop

children's understanding of key vocabulary associated with sequencing, comparisons and sorting, spatial relationships, and temporal relationships. Children have opportunities to learn the functions and properties of objects, and classify and group materials.

- 14 The environment reflects the **homes and lives** of children in terms of culture and language. Children's work is displayed in classrooms.
- 15 Staff uses positive **behavior management** for discipline. Adults involve children in the development of clear and consistent rules
- 16 Staff have frequent opportunities and **time to plan** together and with staff of other Even Start components. At least weekly, staff have an opportunity to discuss their observations of children's development and to seek guidance for instructional approaches.
- 17 Teachers use a variety of **assessment procedures** that are embedded in instruction, including observation, performance assessment, portfolios and interviews. Teachers regularly **observe** children and record observations for use in planning activities and assessing progress. Records of progress and development are maintained on each child and regularly shared with parents. Children are helped to understand their progress in learning. The program has a process for referring children for screening and additional support.
- 18 Children are **relaxed and happy** in the early childhood environment.
- 19 The program matches expected participation to the needs and development of the child, **individualizing** for each child. Staff have identified activities for the development of individual children based on observations. Staff provide opportunities for all children to succeed.
- 20 **Parents provide input** on children's readiness for various activities and also observations of children's progress. Parents are involved in planning programs for children. Staff help parents understand how home activities can reinforce and extend children's learning.



SIGNS OF PROBLEMS WITH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

- 1** Children are unhappy, unsure or tense.
- 2** Staff are not aware of children's previous or other current child care arrangements or experiences.
- 3** Classrooms are quiet. Children are not encouraged to talk with each other.
- 4** Materials are minimal and/or inappropriate for the age range of children.
- 5** Activities are limited to traditional school readiness or group activities. All children are doing the same activities.
- 6** Staff do not understand goals of family literacy or have not received special training in family literacy.
- 7** None of the staff have degrees or specialization in early childhood education.
- 8** Staff have infrequent contact with parents, for example, less than once or twice a month. Parents are not encouraged to visit the center or classrooms.
- 9** Parents are not clear about what their children are experiencing and its value.
- 10** Parents are not clear about their children's progress.
- 11** Staff rely on standardized assessments for gauging children's progress.
- 12** Staff do not base instruction on scientifically-based reading research and rely solely on packaged materials. There is frequent use of worksheets.
- 13** The classroom is dominated by commercial materials, rather than children's work.
- 14** There is no environmental print apparent in the classroom. There are no materials for drawing and writing.
- 15** Staff do not connect activities to developmental outcomes.
- 16** All activities are initiated by the children or all activities are structured by the teachers.
- 17** There is frequent turnover or change of staff so that relationships with children are not continuous.
- 18** Physical space is arranged like an elementary classroom (in other words, desks in rows).
- 19** Accommodations are not made for children with disabilities and special needs.



ADULT BASIC EDUCATION & LITERACY

See sections on Recruitment and Retention for other indicators related to Adult Basic Education and Literacy. Quality considerations for secondary adult education and English as a Second Language services will be addressed in the Guide to Quality, Volume II.

CHALLENGE: To improve the self-sufficiency of families by **enabling adults to: identify their personal and educational needs; meet their goals related to those needs; increase their English-language literacy levels; enhance skills and opportunities related to employability; and improve their ability to be advocates for and teachers of their children.**

EVEN START NOTE: Basic education and literacy instruction for parents that leads to economic self-sufficiency is a core component of all Even Start programs. [Sections 1205(4) and 14101(15), ESEA.]

Teen parents are eligible to participate in Even Start if they:

- are within the age of compulsory school attendance and the LEA provides or ensures the availability of the basic education component;
- are attending secondary school; or
- participate in activities under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act [Section 1203(1)].

Parents are eligible to participate under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act if they:

- lack sufficient mastery of basic literacy skills to enable them to function effectively in society;
- do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent, and have not achieved an equivalent level of education; or
- are unable to speak, read or write the English language.

In order to provide sufficient services to meet participants' needs and goals and to avoid duplication, collaborations often include agencies that provide tutoring, vocational and job training, and postsecondary education. By necessity, adult basic education services are often delivered in various settings and employ many different program models and approaches.

Quality Considerations

- 1 The program recognizes that **adults play multiple roles** — parent/family member, worker and citizen/community member – and that these roles affect their participation in the program and the goals they set for themselves as adult learners. Therefore, the program values a wide variety of functional skills and academic goals (for example, reading to children, getting a driver's license, getting a job, obtaining a high school diploma or its equivalent).
- 2 **Instructional staff** who are paid by Even Start have or are working toward **obtaining certification or a college degree** in fields related to adult education or early childhood, elementary or secondary education. If adult education staff are employed by a collaborating agency, Even Start program administrators are involved in their selection whenever possible.
- 3 Staff are knowledgeable about the **characteristics of adult learners** (for example, they are self-directed, and desire instruction to be relevant to their lives and have practical applications). Staff

are knowledgeable about learners' cultures and languages, including the influence this has on program participation and reactions to new information.

- 4 Adult learners have **short and long term goals** for their participation in education and training. The goals represent realistic expectations and take into consideration previous education and work experiences. These goals are expressed in a written plan and are measurable or observable. Goals are revisited periodically and revised when necessary, and progress toward goal attainment is assessed. Adults' individual goals shape the program and are directly and explicitly connected to instruction.
- 5 Adults' initial **literacy skills are assessed using appropriate instruments**. The baseline for measuring improvement in literacy skills is the level of literacy exhibited or documented upon program entry. Staff are aware that testing during intake is not appropriate for some adult learners and may postpone formal assessment until a later date.
- 6 Intake procedures include some type of **self-evaluation** to elicit personal attitudes, values and perceptions about learning and expectations of the program, since these are important indicators of self-esteem, motivation and persistence.
- 7 Program staff work with learners to **remove or reduce** situational and institutional **participation barriers**; for example, lack of child care, transportation and support services, and the schedule and variety of program services offered.
- 8 **Self-direction** is supported and encouraged. Adult learners are involved in making decisions about all aspects of the learning process, and are given sufficient information about education services and options to make informed decisions.
- 9 **Academic content is taught within a functional context** appropriate to the lives of adult learners (for example, workplace, parenting, and/or life skills). Content is **integrated** with other program components. The adult education component includes competence in life skills, numeracy, reading and language, and computer skills. Language literacy includes reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Writing is incorporated into the majority of learning activities, and learners who need explicit writing instruction receive it.
- 10 Instruction and learning activities explicitly build upon **learners' prior knowledge**. Instruction emphasizes integration of new learning with previous experiences and knowledge, and encourages application and transfer of learning to daily life and new situations. Connections are made to children's instructional programs and to the activities of home-based instruction.

- 11** A **variety of instructional methods** is used, including a balance of individual and group activities. The instructional mix includes independent study, small group instruction, computer-aided instruction, cooperative learning, and individual tutoring.
- 12** **Adults in the lowest literacy levels** participate in adult education lessons or classes for at least 100 hours per year. This participation may be a combination of tutoring, on-site classes, off-site classes, home-based and computer-based instruction. Most adults make regular progress on formal and informal literacy indicators (such as grade levels and life skills goals) until they exit the program.
- 13** **Adults who enter the program at higher literacy levels** who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent, obtain a diploma or equivalent within two years. Adults who obtain their high school diploma or equivalent while in the program who are still eligible to participate based on their children's eligibility continue to pursue other goals, including employment, job training or postsecondary education.
- 14** A combination of **formal and informal assessment** methods is used to identify ongoing needs and to measure progress. Post-testing is done after 50 to 70 hours of basic literacy instruction or at the end of specific courses. Informal assessment is done regularly and frequently. Results are discussed with learners and linked to learners' goals and to instructional plans. Ideally, assessments are carried out in the context of meaningful tasks and are related to performance. Adults understand the purpose and results of assessments, and can explain their own progress.
- 15** **Materials** are appropriate for the **range of literacy levels**, interests and goals of learners represented in the program. Materials are culturally and linguistically appropriate, and reflect the context and needs of learners' lives. Materials include authentic items, such as newspapers, standard forms, magazines, novels, workplace items, parenting information, and household and financial items (for example, correspondence and bills).
- 16** The physical and emotional **learning environment** is suitable for and respectful of adults; in other words, there is appropriate furniture and an atmosphere of mutual trust and acceptance. Staff have good **rapprochement with learners** and value their life experiences and ideas.
- 17** **Program design** offers maximum **flexibility** for the adult learner in terms of entry options, format, schedule and location. The program actively encourages re-entry if absence from program occurs, and recognizes absences due to unforeseeable problems (for example, job change or loss, family crisis).

- 18** The program ensures that **adequate adult education services** (approximately 60 hours per month) are provided by the program itself or with collaborating programs. **Instructional services are continuous**, including the summer months, although the format of services may change in different program cycles.
- 19** The program promotes advancement in learning beyond basic literacy. **Job readiness** and career exploration are part of the curriculum. Staff are knowledgeable about a range of options for participants to continue their learning and/or obtain employment (for example, community college, vocational programs, business contacts, and intern or training programs). Staff develop **transition plans** with adult learners to meet their goals, including long-term goals for self-sufficiency.
- 20** Staff are knowledgeable about the **educational uses and benefits of technology**. Staff ensure that adult learners have access to and assistance in using computer-based instruction. Computer-based instruction includes educational, commercial and web-based courses in academic subjects, office and training applications, and general interest topics. Access may include computers on-site, computers off-site (in public facilities and collaborating agencies), and distance learning (web-based or via satellite).
- 21** Staff are knowledgeable about **learning disabilities** and ensure that the needs of adults with learning disabilities are met.
- 22** **Staff act as facilitators and resources**. They also recognize and promote learners as resources for each other. Staff model and encourage problem-solving behaviors to help adults become more independent and self-sufficient.
- 23** Staff turnover is low. Learners generally have the same instructor for the program year. If staff changes occur, program ensures **continuity** of academic work and instructional methods.
- 24** Staff participate in ongoing **staff development**, including training specifically related to adult and family literacy. Adult education staff from collaborating programs are invited and encouraged to attend professional development activities. Staff maintain contact with parenting and early childhood staff and exchange relevant information. Ideally, they meet weekly to plan an integrated curriculum.



SIGNS OF PROBLEMS WITH ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND LITERACY

- 1** Adult education is not a fully-developed program component, and learning activities occur only periodically; for example, as a by-product of home-based instruction or parenting education.
- 2** Adult education is regarded by learners and by collaborating staff as simply a “fixed course,” which is primarily workbook-based or a commercial product.
- 3** The program has a “one size fits all” mentality concerning adult literacy and basic education services. Most activities do not directly or clearly relate to individual adult learners’ goals and needs. The majority of time is spent in whole group instruction or doing drill and practice exercises.
- 4** Materials are limited in number and variety. For example, they are predominantly prepared texts (basal readers and workbooks), cover a narrow range of reading skills and topics, or are not representative of learners’ cultures.
- 5** Adult learners do not perceive and cannot describe the relevance of instruction to their daily lives or to their goals.
- 6** Adults learners do not have plans for continuing their education or job training after leaving the Even Start program.
- 7** Adult education staff from collaborating programs do not value the goals of the Even Start program. Adult education staff do not participate in Even Start staff development and planning activities.
- 8** Adults who drop out of the program cite situational and institutional participation barriers (for example, child care, program schedule, and location).
- 9** Staff believe learners are not motivated. Staff do not believe it is their job to improve learners’ motivation.
- 10** Only a few adults who enter the program at the lowest literacy levels progress to a functional level of literacy or to pre-GED (general equivalency diploma) studies while in the program.
- 11** Only a few adults who enter the program at higher literacy levels receive their high school diploma or equivalent while in the program.





PARENTING EDUCATION

CHALLENGE: To have a positive impact on the whole family by enhancing the relationships between parents and children and the literacy value of family interactions.

EVEN START NOTE: Parenting education is a core instructional component of Even Start family literacy programs. [Sections 1205(4) and 14101(15), ESEA.] The overall goal of parenting education is to strengthen parents' support of their young children's literacy development and early school success. This program component, and the home-based instruction component, include a wide array of program activities designed to strengthen families' support for their young children's educational success, including: literacy development of parents and children through increasing the frequency and quality of literacy activities in the home; facilitating children's transition to school, and the interactions of parents with schools and the wider community; and improving parents' understanding of child development.

Welfare reform requirements have had a significant impact on the amount of time that adults can devote to education and family programs, and many parents feel they must focus their energies on work preparedness. As a result, parents' time constraints may affect the attention that Even Start programs pay to parenting education. To address this challenge, it is crucial for programs to continue to integrate parenting education with other program components.

Quality Considerations

- 1 The focus of parenting education is **content that supports children's literacy development** and early educational success. Programs have clear goals and objectives for parenting education that are tied to literacy outcomes.
- 2 In order to produce substantial improvements in literacy outcomes for children, parents **participate intensively in parenting-related activities** (approximately 20 hours per month), and such activities are integrated with other program components.
- 3 Parenting education programs provide a **balanced range of information and skill-building opportunities** to: engage parents in language-rich parent-child interactions; provide supports for literacy in the family; support parents in holding appropriate expectations of the child's learning and development; support parents in actively embracing the parenting role; and build the capacity of parents to form and maintain connections to the community and other resources.
- 4 **Parent-child interactive literacy activities** are an integral part of the program's parenting education plan. The program provides regularly scheduled opportunities for guided parent-child interactions, such as dialogic reading, and using open-ended questions to prompt discussions and enrich verbal exchanges.

- 5 There are a **variety of ways that parents can participate** in parenting activities (such as individual coaching and mentoring, and group activities), and staff use different approaches for presenting information (such as discussions, readings, and use of media). Parents' level and type of participation is also based on family goals and parents' literacy skills.
- 6 **Reading by adults and by adults to children every day** is encouraged. There is an explicit intent to increase the amount of literacy activity in the household. The program helps parents to learn about sources of books for children and themselves, including becoming borrowers at public libraries. The program provides specific opportunities for parents to improve their skills in reading to and with their children, including direct instruction and staff modeling on strategies for reading with children.
- 7 Parenting education includes attention to **family development** and family relationships. The parenting program includes attention to increasing **parents' sense of efficacy** (that is, their belief that they can make a difference in their children's lives).
- 8 Parenting education builds on the **interests and questions of parents**, and does not rely solely on scripted materials. Parents are actively involved in the design and planning of parenting activities. Ongoing assessments by parents are used to ensure responsiveness of activities to parents' interests and needs.
- 9 **All staff** view parenting education as part of their job responsibilities and receive training in parenting education as part of their jobs. Training includes information about the development of language and literacy, ways to support and enhance parents' verbal interactions with children, and strategies for explicit modeling, guided self-reflection, and providing feedback to parents.
- 10 Staff have an empathetic view of parents and the challenges they face. Staff spend time **developing relationships with parents** but are aware of appropriate boundaries. Staff supervision includes support for helping staff set and maintain appropriate boundaries. Staff can distinguish their own supportive behaviors that promote parents' self-sufficiency from behaviors that create dependency.
- 11 Parenting education includes attention to **beliefs and attitudes about child-rearing** in addition to dealing with positive behavior management. The program presents clear values about the importance of attentive, warm and flexible interactions between parents and children for children's development. The program provides guided opportunities for parents to solve problems within the context of routine family events. The program is sensitive to cultural differences in child rearing beliefs and techniques but recognizes appropriate limits, especially related to child health and safety.

- 12 Although staff recognize the importance of addressing the most pressing concerns of families, they also recognize their role is not to be the sole provider of services. The program has collaborators who provide support that families need beyond what Even Start can offer. **Collaborators** might include counseling services, substance abuse treatment and violence prevention programs, housing and food/nutrition services, and legal assistance. The program works with collaborators to ensure that families receive messages that are consistent with Even Start messages.
- 13 Parent development and child development issues and questions are addressed frequently and directly. The program affords opportunities for **one-to-one** exchanges for dealing with parenting issues.
- 14 Parenting education helps parents maintain **home environments** that are supportive of children through the development of routines, use of literacy in everyday activities, building coping strategies for adapting to changes, and supporting physical and mental health.
- 15 Activities are designed for easy **transfer of learning** to other situations, including the home learning environment. Expectations for and ideas about transfer of learning and practice are explicit, and teachers follow up with parents individually.
- 16 Parenting activities have **literacy connections**; in other words, parenting education strengthens literacy experiences that occur within routine family interactions. Parenting is integrated into the teaching of academic skills.
- 17 The program devises opportunities for the **whole family** to participate in parenting activities. Special efforts are made to invite other adults who are co-parenting children to parenting education activities and family events.
- 18 The materials used in parenting and parent-child activities are **culturally and linguistically relevant**. Parent-child activities are carried out in the dominant language of families.
- 19 The program designs activities to strengthen **partnerships between parents and schools**. Parents participate in a variety of school and classroom activities, including attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering, governance, and home learning activities. Programs work with schools to find opportunities for parents to become involved in school activities outside traditional school hours.
- 20 The program helps parents **advocate for their children**, including how to obtain high quality services from public and private agencies (for example, child care, educational evaluations).



SIGNS OF PROBLEMS WITH PARENTING EDUCATION

- 1** Staff do not believe that parents have existing skills and strengths upon which to build.
- 2** Parents are not involved in planning activities.
- 3** Staff do not know individual families' needs and interests.
- 4** Most of parent education time is spent listening to presentations by invited experts.
- 5** Parenting education activities do not provide adequate opportunities for parents to work with their own children.
- 6** Staff do not model positive adult-child interactions.
- 7** Parenting activities only include one family member; there are no special activities designed to involve other family members.
- 8** The program predominantly uses commercial materials for parenting education.
- 9** Parenting activities are held sporadically.
- 10** There has been no training for staff in parenting education.
- 11** Parenting education programming does not provide adequate opportunities for parents to work with their own children.
- 12** Parenting education does not focus on literacy development.
- 13** The content of parent training provided by collaborators differs from Even Start core values.
- 14** There is no debriefing time following parent-child activities.



PARENT & CHILD INTERACTIVE LITERACY ACTIVITIES

CHALLENGE: To increase parents' knowledge of their children's development and learning, to build parents' capacity to provide a stimulating literacy environment in the home, and to enable them to be their children's first teacher.

EVEN START NOTE: Although parent-child interactive literacy activities are listed as a separate component within the definition of family literacy services [Section 14101(15), ESEA], this required component is an integral part of parenting education. Often referred to as PACT (parent and child time), parent-child interactive literacy activities are discussed separately in this Guide to highlight their importance, and to ensure that Even Start staff include this component in program planning.

Parent-child time is the opportunity for parents to learn how their children learn through one-to-one interaction and observation. By observing how their children learn through playing and other activities, parents can monitor and enhance their children's development. During parent-child time, parents also have an opportunity to practice parenting and behavior management strategies they have learned about in parenting education. Parent-child time can be implemented in a variety of ways: during home-based instruction, as part of the daily early childhood classroom routine, or as part of organized family events. The goal of all of these activities is to provide opportunities for parents to engage in a literacy-based learning opportunity with their children.

Quality Considerations

- 1 Activities for parent-child time have a **literacy focus**. Special attention is paid to activities that support children's growth and language development.
- 2 Parent-child time and activities are designed to help **each parent learn more about his/her own child(ren)** through both observation and play. These interactions help parents to see their children as active contributors to their own development and learning, form reasonable expectations about their children's abilities, and devise their own challenging but achievable play/learning activities. Parents also participate in discussions about these interactions with staff and other parents, reflecting on what they learn about child development and how to apply this knowledge to both center-based and home-based parent-child activities.
- 3 The program schedules **regular opportunities** for parent-child interactive literacy activities. Formats are varied (for example, home-based instruction, during the child's classroom routines) to accommodate parents' schedules and interests. Parents are involved in planning activities and deciding whether they are child-directed or parent-directed.
- 4 Parent-child activities are **developmentally appropriate** for the age of the child. Activities are designed to ensure ease of transfer by parents to the home setting.

- 5 Parent-child activities encourage **verbal interaction** between parents and their children, object manipulation and play, and engaging children in problem-solving and decision-making. Parents and children **read stories together** in an active and participatory manner. Activities are fun and encourage involvement of both child and parent.
- 6 The program provides opportunities for parents to increase their observation skills and practice them in **multiple contexts**. Parents have opportunities to try out learning activities with each other before doing them with their children.
- 7 Parent-child activities are **culturally sensitive**. Staff take time to learn how parents and their children are comfortable learning together, and work with parents to plan parent-child activities based on this information.
- 8 Staff provide **training and feedback** for parents on how to initiate parent-child learning activities on their own as part of everyday family routines.
- 9 Staff follow up with individual parents and provide additional information and support to assist parents in **transferring parent-child activities into the home setting**.



SIGNS OF PROBLEMS WITH PARENT & CHILD INTERACTIVE LITERACY ACTIVITIES

- 1** Parent-child time is only offered during the early childhood classroom day, even though some parents do not have children present in the classroom.
- 2** Staff consider parents to have participated in parent-child time, even when they have not worked directly with their own child.
- 3** Parents have no input concerning how parent-child time is designed.
- 4** There is no specific preparation for parents prior to their engagement in parent-child activities.
- 5** Parent-child time is seen as an “add-on” to the program.
- 6** Parent-child activities are overly complicated.
- 7** Parents focus more on completing an activity during parent-child time than on observing their children’s learning.
- 8** Activities use expensive materials and/or objects not commonly found in the home, making transfer of activities to the home difficult.
- 9** Parent-child activities happen infrequently, less than once a week.
- 10** Parent-child time is not provided for parents of school-aged children.





HOME-BASED INSTRUCTION (FORMERLY CALLED HOME VISITING)

CHALLENGE: To build on existing family strengths, show respect for the family's culture, emphasize that the home is a child's first and most important learning environment, and demonstrate that learning occurs through every day experiences. Home-based instruction increases the intensity and individualization of program services, as well as increasing access to services for some families.

EVEN START NOTE: The Even Start statute requires local programs to provide integrated instructional services to participating families through home-based program services. [Section 1205(7), ESEA.] Home-based instruction is intended primarily to advance the educational goals of the program; that is, the goal of home-based instruction should be to strengthen the literacy skills of parents and children. Social service support is provided primarily through collaborators but, when necessary, Even Start funds can be used for such support activities. Home instructional staff paid with Even Start funds must meet the qualifications required by Even Start program law [Section 1205(5), ESEA], which are referenced in the section on "Staff Development."

Quality Considerations

- 1 All families receive home visits with an **instructional focus** and educational objectives. The **number and duration of visits** vary by program model and family need. There is a clear rationale for the number of instructional home visits per family that is related to family need and program model.
- 2 Program staff recognize that some families require a **transition period** before instructional home visits begin. Some parents may be uncomfortable allowing staff in their homes and may prefer to participate in group activities first. Temporary alternate locations, such as libraries, are identified if the family is uncomfortable with the visit occurring in the home. Alternative settings should be familiar to and comfortable for the family and allow for focused interaction.
- 3 In unique cases when instructional home visits are not possible because of special circumstances (for example, hostile family members, frequent interruptions, or family is strongly opposed to visits in their home), arrangements are made to **meet at an alternative site**.
- 4 Instructional home visits are prearranged, planned and **regularly scheduled**. Scheduling of visits depends on individual and family schedules. Home instructors and families understand the importance of instructional home visits and make the environment conducive to learning.
- 5 **Literacy is a primary focus of activities.** The instructional home visit is used as an opportunity for the parent and child to learn and play together, and to see the home as the child's "first classroom." Home instructors support the development of literacy in the home by using materials found in the home for learning activities, bringing books to share, and helping parents to create "predictable" reading and play time for the child.

- 6 Materials and approaches for the instructional home visit are **tailored for each family**. Home instructors build upon and adapt to the family environment, seeking transfer of home visit activities to daily interactions between parent and child, and helping the family incorporate literacy into the home environment. In center-based programs, the visit is an extension of educational activities introduced in the center-based setting.
- 7 Instructional home visits are an opportunity to demonstrate **how to balance attention** to parent-child relationship building, child development, and parents' needs and interests.
- 8 During the visit, staff help parents **observe children** and point out developmental interpretations of children's actions. Home instructors model positive interactions and reinforcements.
- 9 **Parents have an active role** in shaping the visit and in the debriefing of the visit. The home instructor and the parent plan activities for the other adults and children who are likely to be present during the instructional home visit.
- 10 The program places a high value on staff's **rapport with families** and families' comfort with home instructors. Rapport with families in the program is key for staff selection and supervision. Staff are assigned to the same families over time whenever possible.
- 11 Staff demonstrate **sensitivity to family** culture and respect family boundaries. Ideally, they speak the first language of the family or involve collaborators who share the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of families.
- 12 The instructional home visit is **linked to all other program components**, and supports retention of families in all components. School and classroom personnel are included in some visits. Home instructors orient other staff who accompany them on visits.
- 13 Program staff view visits as an opportunity to **identify** the need for other **help and services**. Home instructors receive training in how to deal with issues that are apparent or may arise in the home setting, such as physical abuse, substance abuse, and safety and health. The program provides home instructors with backup support to link families to other resources, and maintains formal relationships with appropriate agencies to help families with multiple needs.
- 14 Home instructors and other family workers have credentials that are appropriate for their roles and comply with statutory requirements. **Staff development** for home instructors includes team debriefing of their instructional home visit experiences. For example, for twelve hours of direct service, approximately one hour of supervision, coaching and mentoring is provided, including structured discussions among staff.

- 15 Home instructors are able to set **boundaries** for their roles in working with families.
- 16 The program documents instructional home visit objectives and strategies systematically, and seeks information about the **effectiveness of instructional home visits** in reaching family goals.
- 17 The program **coordinates** instructional home visit activities **with other service providers** who make home visits to the same families. While Even Start staff may need to do separate visits, staff communicate with other home visitors (for example, from Head Start or Home Start) and coordinate visits when feasible. Home instructors inform other Even Start staff about other services that families are receiving, including which other programs are going into the home.



SIGNS OF PROBLEMS WITH HOME-BASED INSTRUCTION

- 1** Home-based instruction does not occur or visits are infrequent, occurring only once or twice a year with each family. Some families do not receive instructional home visits.
- 2** Parents are often not at home for scheduled visits.
- 3** There is no attempt to create a learning environment for the instructional home visit (for example, distractions are not dealt with, television set is left on).
- 4** The parent is a passive bystander during the visit.
- 5** Home-based instruction only addresses singular issues (for example, child development or adult literacy) and is not integrated with other instructional components.
- 6** Home-based activities are independent of activities in other components of the program. Instructional home visits are considered an "add on" rather than an integral part of the program.
- 7** Staff are unsure of how to deal with problems that arise during visits.
- 8** Staff do not feel comfortable in home settings.
- 9** Staff or parents experience cultural or linguistic barriers.
- 10** Home visits are focused on social service needs rather than being instructional in nature.
- 11** Home instructors are viewed as adjunct staff and are not included in program planning



TRANSITIONS

CHALLENGE: To help families create long-term plans that encompass the many transitions they will make as they reach their goals and undergo substantial changes and improvements in their lives. Even Start's goal is to help families adjust to and be successful in different environments.

EVEN START NOTE: Transition refers to continuity across many different types of changes and movement that families will make — entering and exiting Even Start, children moving from home to school, adults moving from home to school or work, and program to program. The Even Start law requires programs to promote the continuity of family literacy to ensure that individuals retain and improve their educational outcomes. [Section 1205(13), ESEA.]

Quality Considerations

- 1 The program recognizes that it can facilitate the **horizontal transitions** (for example, between Even Start and Head Start or day care) and **vertical transitions** (for example, between adult basic literacy and GED classes or vocational training) that adults and children make.
- 2 The program has **policies and procedures** for transitioning into Even Start from other programs, in and out of levels within components, and out of the program as a whole. Transitions out of Even Start are based on exit criteria established by the program, which consider whether families are truly still in need of Even Start services.
- 3 Staff and parents prepare a **transition plan for each family**, including timelines for anticipated changes and outcomes, and support needed during transitions. Transition plans address how comprehensive services will continue when service delivery mechanisms or eligibility change. Transition activities include opportunities to gain familiarity with new settings and programs.
- 4 The program views family members as **lifelong learners** and full members of the community, and looks for opportunities to engage them in activities outside of the Even Start program to broaden their community awareness and involvement.
- 5 **Staff development** includes becoming familiar with the environments and cultures of different settings (home, school, work and other programs) for the purpose of helping family members successfully move between and among different environments. Training addresses how to design activities for families to help them deal with the environments they will enter.
- 6 Staff of Even Start and collaborating **agencies work together** to ease the transitions families make among agencies.

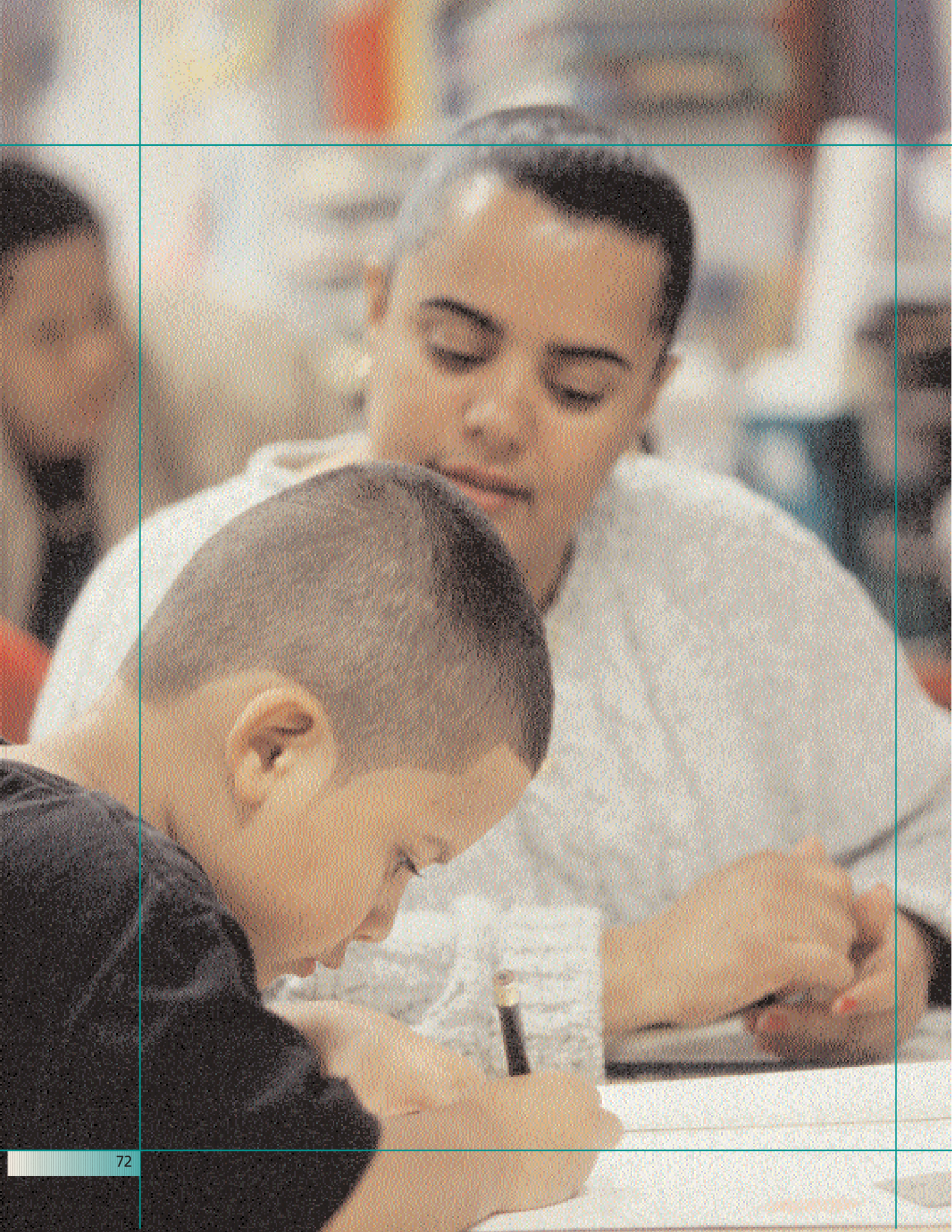
- 7** The program prepares for **transitions of children** from preschool to kindergarten or first grade in some specific ways:
- a. Transition plans are a topic within parenting classes and home-based instruction, and staff suggest ways for parents to deal with children's anxieties.
 - b. Staff tell parents about their legal rights and responsibilities and encourage parental participation in school in a variety of ways.
 - c. Early childhood program staff prepare children to deal with changes through activities such as visitations, role playing, and modeling new routines.
 - d. Staff establish communication with next teachers to share information about each child's developmental progress and needs.
 - e. Staff take a **proactive role with school staff** and staff from other early childhood programs to help bridge cultural and language differences, to help them gain an understanding of parents' involvement, and to help them recognize strengths of families who are economically or educationally disadvantaged.
- 8** The program prepares for **transitions of adults** in some specific ways:
- a. During class and topical workshops, time is spent on problem-based learning related to handling real-life situations (for example, rehearsing job interviews), discussing educational and training opportunities, and accessing information and support services. These activities are designed to increase participants' belief in their ability to navigate and be successful in making transitions.
 - b. Adults who receive high school diplomas or their equivalent seek additional education or training, or obtain employment. Staff stress the need for adults to continue their education and to enhance their skills related to career advancement and long-term personal success and achievement.
 - c. The program maintains connections with employers, postsecondary institutions and social service or other agencies to facilitate next steps for adults.
 - d. Adults develop personal action plans that include timelines and resources needed to attain goals.
- 9** **Children who enter school are successful.** School staff see parents as supportive of children's learning and development. When children enter school, participating families continue in Even Start.
- 10** **The program adjusts** to personal family transitions (for example, divorce, birth, relocation) that occur while families are enrolled in Even Start, and adjusts program services to meet the needs of families during these events.
- 11** **Staff maintain** an appropriate level of **contact** with family members after they exit the program to support their transitions (for example, parents who no longer need direct services may join a program-sponsored parent support group).



SIGNS OF PROBLEMS WITH TRANSITIONS

- 1** No time is devoted to creating transition plans on a program level or with families.
- 2** Families drop out of the program at points of transition.
- 3** Staff resent having to work with other programs or agencies.
- 4** Staff expect transition planning to be initiated and performed by the other programs or schools to which family members are going.
- 5** Staff are not familiar with staff in other settings to which parents and children are going, especially schools, and do not take an active role in reaching out to service providers and teachers to maintain contact with families.
- 6** Transitions are seen as one-time events rather than as an ongoing process.
- 7** Family members who no longer need program services do not transition out of the program, or certain components, when it is appropriate.





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Selected Definitions from Federal Legislation

Adult Education and Literacy Services [Sections 203 and 231(b), Title II, Workforce Investment Act]

The term “adult education” means services or instruction below the postsecondary level for individuals:

- Who have attained 16 years of age;
- Who are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, and
- Who
 - a. Lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to enable the individuals to function effectively in society;
 - b. Do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and have not achieved an equivalent level of education; or
 - c. Are unable to speak, read, or write the English language.

The term “adult education and literacy activities” means services or instruction in one or more of the following categories:

- Adult education and literacy services, including workplace literacy services
- Family literacy services
- English literacy programs

Family Literacy Services [Section 14101, Title I, Part B, ESEA]

This term means services provided to participants on a voluntary basis that are of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family, and that integrate all of the following activities:

- Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children.
- Training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children.
- Parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency.
- An age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.

Scientifically-based Reading Research [Section 2252(5), Reading Excellence Act]

This term means the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading difficulties. This includes research that:

- Employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment;
- Involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn;
- Relies on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers, and across multiple measurements and observations; and
- Has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparatively rigorous, objective and scientific review.

**THE EVEN START FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMS STATUTE,
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2000,
INCLUDING AMENDMENTS MADE BY THE LITERACY INVOLVES FAMILIES
TOGETHER (LIFT) ACT,
AS ENACTED BY P.L. 106-554,
THE CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001.**

[Compilation prepared by the U.S. Department of Education,
Office of the General Counsel staff, February 22, 2001]

NOTE: The LIFT Act is Title XVI of
Division B of H.R. 5666, as enacted by
section 1(a)(4) of Public Law 106-554.

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT OF 1965

Title I — Helping Disadvantaged Children Meet High Standards

§1002. Authorization of appropriations.

PART B — WILLIAM F. GOODLING EVEN START FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMS

§1201. Statement of purpose.

§1202. Program authorized.

§1203. State programs.

§1204. Uses of funds.

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Title XIV — General Provisions

Part A — Definitions

§14101. Definitions

TITLE I — HELPING DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN MEET HIGH STANDARDS

* * * * *

SEC. 1002. [20 U.S.C. 6302] AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

* * * * *

(b) EVEN START.—For the purpose of carrying out part B, there are authorized to be appropriated \$250,000,000 for fiscal year 2001 and such sums as may be necessary for each of the four succeeding fiscal years.

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PART B — WILLIAM F. GOODLING EVEN START FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMS

SEC. 1201. [20 U.S.C. 6361] STATEMENT OF PURPOSE.

It is the purpose of this part to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving the educational opportunities of the Nation's low-income families by integrating early childhood education, adult literacy or adult basic education, and parenting education into a unified family literacy program, to be referred to as "Even Start".

The program shall—

- (1) be implemented through cooperative projects that build on high quality existing community resources to create a new range of services;
- (2) promote the academic achievement of children and adults;
- (3) assist children and adults from low-income families to achieve to challenging State content standards and challenging State student performance standards; and
- (4) use instructional programs based on scientifically based reading research (as defined in section 2252) and the prevention of reading difficulties for children and adults, to the extent such research is available.

SEC. 1202. [20 U.S.C. 6362] PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.

(a) RESERVATION FOR MIGRANT PROGRAMS, OUTLYING AREAS, AND INDIAN TRIBES.

- (1) IN GENERAL.—For each fiscal year, the Secretary shall reserve 5 percent of the amount appropriated under section 1002(b) (or, if such appropriated amount exceeds \$200,000,000, 6 percent of such amount) for programs, under such terms and conditions as the Secretary shall establish, that are consistent with the purpose of this part, and according to their relative needs, for—

- (A) children of migratory workers;
- (B) the outlying areas; and
- (C) Indian tribes and tribal organizations.

(2) SPECIAL RULE.—After the date of the enactment of the Literacy Involves Families Together Act, the Secretary shall award a grant, on a competitive basis, of sufficient size and for a period of sufficient duration to demonstrate the effectiveness of a family literacy program in a prison that houses women and their preschool age children and that has the capability of developing a program of high quality.

(3) COORDINATION OF PROGRAMS FOR AMERICAN INDIANS.—The Secretary shall ensure that programs under paragraph (1)(C) are coordinated with family literacy programs operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in order to avoid duplication and to encourage the dissemination of information on high quality family literacy programs serving American Indians.

(b) RESERVATION FOR FEDERAL ACTIVITIES.—

(1) EVALUATION, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT, AND REPLICATION ACTIVITIES.—From amounts appropriated under section 1002(b), the Secretary may reserve not more than 3 percent of such amounts for purposes of—
carrying out the evaluation required by section 1209; and

(B) providing, through grants or contracts with eligible organizations, technical assistance, program improvement, and replication activities.

(2) RESEARCH.—In the case of fiscal years 2001 through 2004, if the amount appropriated under section 1002(b) for any of such years—

(A) is equal to or less than the amounts appropriated for the preceding fiscal year, the Secretary may reserve from such amount only the amount necessary to continue multi-year activities carried out pursuant to section 1211(b) that began during or prior to the preceding fiscal year; or

(B) exceeds the amount appropriated for the preceding fiscal year, the Secretary shall reserve from such excess amount \$2,000,000 or 50 percent, whichever is less, to carry out section 1211(b).

(c) RESERVATION FOR GRANTS.—

(1) GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—For any fiscal year for which at least one State applies and submits an application that meets the requirements and goals of this subsection and for which the amount appropriated under section 1002(b) exceeds the amount appropriated under such section for the preceding fiscal year, the Secretary shall reserve, from the amount of such excess remaining after the application of subsection (b)(2), the amount of such remainder or \$1,000,000, whichever is less, to award grants, on a competitive basis, to States to enable such States to plan and implement statewide family literacy initiatives to coordinate and, where appropriate, integrate existing Federal, State, and local literacy resources consistent with the purposes of this part. Such coordi-

nation and integration shall include funds available under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, the Head Start Act, this part, part A of this title, and part A of title IV of the Social Security Act. No State may receive more than one grant under this subsection.

(2) CONSORTIA.—

(A) ESTABLISHMENT.—To receive a grant under this subsection, a State shall establish a consortium of State-level programs under the following laws:

- (i) This title (other than part D).
- (ii) The Head Start Act.
- (iii) The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act.
- (iv) All other State-funded preschool programs and programs providing literacy services to adults

(B) PLAN.—To receive a grant under this subsection, the consortium established by a State shall create a plan to use a portion of the State's resources, derived from the programs referred to in subparagraph (A), to strengthen and expand family literacy services in such State.

(C) COORDINATION WITH PART C OF TITLE II.—The consortium shall coordinate its activities with the activities of the reading and literacy partnership for the State established under section 2253(d), if the State educational agency receives a grant under section 2253.

(3) READING INSTRUCTION.—Statewide family literacy initiatives implemented under this subsection shall base reading instruction on scientifically based reading research (as such term is defined in section 2252).

(4) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall provide, directly or through a grant or contract with an organization with experience in the development and operation of successful family literacy services, technical assistance to States receiving a grant under this subsection.

(5) MATCHING REQUIREMENT.—The Secretary shall not make a grant to a State under this subsection unless the State agrees that, with respect to the costs to be incurred by the eligible consortium in carrying out the activities for which the grant was awarded, the State will make available non-Federal contributions in an amount equal to not less than the Federal funds provided under the grant.

(d) STATE ALLOCATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—From amounts appropriated under section 1002(b) and not reserved under subsections (a), (b), and (c), the Secretary shall make grants to States from allocations under paragraph (2).

(2) ALLOCATIONS.—Except as provided in paragraph (3), from the total amount available

for allocation to States in any fiscal year, each State shall be eligible to receive a grant under paragraph (1) in an amount that bears the same ratio to such total amount as the amount allocated under part A to that State bears to the total amount allocated under that part to all the States.

(3) MINIMUM.—No State shall receive a grant under paragraph (1) in any fiscal year in an amount which is less than \$250,000, or one-half of 1 percent of the amount appropriated under section 1002(b) and not reserved under subsections (a), (b), and (c) for such year, whichever is greater.

(e) DEFINITIONS.—For the purpose of this part—

(1) the term “eligible entity” means a partnership composed of both—
a local educational agency; and

(B) a nonprofit community-based organization, a public agency other than a local educational agency, an institution of higher education, or a public or private nonprofit organization other than a local educational agency, of demonstrated quality;

(2) the term “eligible organization” means any public or private nonprofit organization with a record of providing effective services to family literacy providers, such as the National Center for Family Literacy, Parents as Teachers, Inc., the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters, and the Home and School Institute, Inc.;

(3) the terms “Indian tribe” and “tribal organization” have the meanings given such terms in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act; and

(4) the term “State” includes each of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

SEC. 1203. [20 U.S.C. 6363] STATE PROGRAMS.

(a) STATE LEVEL ACTIVITIES.—Each State that receives a grant under section 1202(d)(1) may use not more than a total of 6 percent of the grant funds for the costs of—

(1) administration, not to exceed half of such total;

(2) providing, through one or more subgrants or contracts, technical assistance for program improvement and replication, to eligible entities that receive subgrants under subsection (b); and

(3) carrying out section 1210.

(b) SUBGRANTS FOR LOCAL PROGRAMS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Each State shall use the grant funds received under section 1202(d)(1) and not reserved under subsection (a) to award subgrants to eligible entities to carry out Even Start programs.

(3) carrying out section 1210.

(b) SUBGRANTS FOR LOCAL PROGRAMS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Each State shall use the grant funds received under section 1202(d)(1) and not reserved under subsection (a) to award subgrants to eligible entities to carry out Even Start programs.

(2) MINIMUM SUBGRANT AMOUNTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subparagraphs (B) and (C), no State shall award a subgrant under paragraph (1) in an amount less than \$75,000.

(B) SUBGRANTEES IN NINTH AND SUCCEEDING YEARS.—No State shall award a subgrant under paragraph (1) in an amount less than \$52,500 to an eligible entity for a fiscal year to carry out an Even Start program that is receiving assistance under this part or its predecessor authority for the ninth (or any subsequent) fiscal year.

(C) EXCEPTION FOR SINGLE SUBGRANT.—A State may award one subgrant in each fiscal year of sufficient size, scope, and quality to be effective in an amount less than \$75,000 if, after awarding subgrants under paragraph (1) for such fiscal year in accordance with subparagraphs (A) and (B), less than \$75,000 is available to the State to award such subgrants.

SEC. 1204. [20 U.S.C. 6364] USES OF FUNDS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out an Even Start program under this part, a recipient of funds under this part shall use such funds to pay the Federal share of the cost of providing intensive family literacy services that involve parents and children, from birth through age seven, in a cooperative effort to help parents become full partners in the education of their children and to assist children in reaching their full potential as learners.

(b) FEDERAL SHARE LIMITATION.—

IN GENERAL.—

(A) Except as provided in paragraph (2), the Federal share under this part may not exceed—

- (i) 90 percent of the total cost of the program in the first year that such program receives assistance under this part or its predecessor authority;
- (ii) 80 percent in the second such year;
- (iii) 70 percent in the third such year;
- (iv) 60 percent in the fourth such year; and
- (v) 50 percent in the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth such years; and

(vi) 35 percent in any subsequent such year.

(B) The remaining cost of a program assisted under this part may be provided in cash or in kind, fairly evaluated and may be obtained from any source, including other Federal funds under this Act.

(2) WAIVER.—The State educational agency may waive, in whole or in part, the cost-sharing requirement described in paragraph (1) for an eligible entity if such entity—

(A) demonstrates that such entity otherwise would not be able to participate in the program assisted under this part; and

(B) negotiates an agreement with the State educational agency with respect to the amount of the remaining cost to which the waiver will be applicable.

(3) PROHIBITION.—Federal funds provided under this part may not be used for the indirect costs of a program assisted under this part, except that the Secretary may waive this paragraph if an eligible recipient of funds reserved under section 1202(a)(1)(C) demonstrates to the Secretary's satisfaction that such recipient otherwise would not be able to participate in the program assisted under this part.

(c) USE OF FUNDS FOR FAMILY LITERACY SERVICES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—From funds reserved under 1203(a), a State may use a portion of such funds to assist eligible entities receiving a subgrant under section 1203(b) in improving the quality of family literacy services provided under Even Start programs under this part, except that in no case may a State's use of funds for this purpose for a fiscal year result in a decrease from the level of activities and services provided to program participants in the preceding year.

(2) PRIORITY.—In carrying out paragraph (1), a State shall give priority to programs that were of low quality, as evaluated based on the indicators of program quality developed by the State under section 1210.

(3) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO HELP LOCAL PROGRAMS RAISE ADDITIONAL FUNDS.—In carrying out paragraph (1), a State may use the funds referred to in such paragraph to provide technical assistance to help local programs of demonstrated effectiveness to access and leverage additional funds for the purpose of expanding services and reducing waiting lists, including requesting and applying for non-Federal resources.

(4) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING.—Assistance under paragraph (1) shall be in the form of technical assistance and training, provided by a State through a grant, contract, or cooperative agreement with an entity that has experience in offering high quality training and technical assistance to family literacy providers.

SEC. 1205. [20 U.S.C. 6365] PROGRAM ELEMENTS.

Each program assisted under this part shall—

(1) include the identification and recruitment of families most in need of services provided under this part, as indicated by a low level of income, a low level of adult literacy or English language proficiency of the eligible parent or parents, and other need-related indicators;

(2) include screening and preparation of parents, including teenage parents and children to enable such parents to participate fully in the activities and services provided under this part, including testing, referral to necessary counseling, other developmental and support services, and related services;

(3) be designed to accommodate the participants' work schedule and other responsibilities, including the provision of support services, when such services are unavailable from other sources, necessary for participation in the activities assisted under this part, such as—

(A) scheduling and locating of services to allow joint participation by parents and children;

(B) child care for the period that parents are involved in the program provided under this part; and

(C) transportation for the purpose of enabling parents and their children to participate in programs authorized by this part;

(4) include high-quality, intensive instructional programs that promote adult literacy and empower parents to support the educational growth of their children, developmentally appropriate early childhood educational services, and preparation of children for success in regular school programs;

(5) with respect to the qualification of staff the cost of whose salaries are paid, in whole or in part, with Federal funds provided under this part, ensure that—

(A) not later than 4 years after the date of the enactment of the Literacy Involves Families Together Act—

(i) a majority of the individuals providing academic instruction—

(I) shall have obtained an associate's, bachelor's, or graduate degree in a field related to early childhood education, elementary or secondary school education, or adult education; and

(II) if applicable, shall meet qualifications established by the State for early childhood education, elementary or secondary school education, or adult education provided as part of an Even Start program or another family literacy program;

(ii) the individual responsible for administration of family literacy services under this part has received training in the operation of a family literacy program; and

(iii) paraprofessionals who provide support for academic instruction have a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent; and

(B) beginning on the date of the enactment of the Literacy Involves Families Together Act, all new personnel hired to provide academic instruction—

- (i) have obtained an associate's, bachelor's, or graduate degree in a field related to early childhood education, elementary or secondary school education, or adult education; and
- (ii) if applicable, meet qualifications established by the State for early childhood education, elementary or secondary school education, or adult education provided as part of an Even Start program or another family literacy program;

(6) include special training of staff, including child care staff, to develop the skills necessary to work with parents and young children in the full range of instructional services offered through this part;

(7) provide and monitor integrated instructional services to participating parents and children through home-based programs;

(8) operate on a year-round basis, including the provision of some program services, instructional and enrichment, during the summer months;

(9) be coordinated with—

(A) programs assisted under other parts of this title and this Act;

(B) any relevant programs under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998; and

(C) the Head Start program, volunteer literacy programs, and other relevant programs;

(10) use instructional programs based on scientifically based reading research (as defined in section 2252) for children and adults, to the extent such research is available;

(11) encourage participating families to attend regularly and to remain in the program a sufficient time to meet their program goals;

(12) include reading readiness activities for preschool children based on scientifically based reading research (as defined in section 2252), to the extent available, to ensure children enter school ready to learn to read;

(13) if applicable, promote the continuity of family literacy to ensure that individuals retain and improve their educational outcomes[;]

(14) ensure that the programs will serve those families most in need of the activities and services provided by this part; and

(15) provide for an independent evaluation of the program to be used for program improvement.

SEC. 1206. [20 U.S.C. 6366] ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subsection (b), eligible participants in an Even Start program are—

(1) a parent or parents—

(A) who are eligible for participation in adult education and literacy activities under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act; or

(B) who are within the State’s compulsory school attendance age range, so long as a local educational agency provides (or ensures the availability of) the basic education component required under this part, or who are attending secondary school; and

(2) the child or children, from birth through age seven, of any individual described in paragraph (1).

(b) ELIGIBILITY FOR CERTAIN OTHER PARTICIPANTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Family members of eligible participants described in subsection (a) may participate in activities and services provided under this part, when appropriate to serve the purpose of this part.

(2) SPECIAL RULE.—Any family participating in a program assisted under this part that becomes ineligible for such participation as a result of one or more members of the family becoming ineligible for such participation may continue to participate in the program until all members of the family become ineligible for such participation, which—

(A) in the case of a family in which ineligibility was due to the child or children of such family attaining the age of eight, shall be in two years or when the parent or parents become ineligible due to educational advancement, whichever occurs first; and

(B) in the case of a family in which ineligibility was due to the educational advancement of the parent or parents of such family, shall be when all children in the family attain the age of eight.

(3) CHILDREN 8 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER.—If an Even Start program assisted under this part collaborates with a program under part A, and funds received under such part A program contribute to paying the cost of providing programs under this part to children 8 years of age or older, the Even Start program, notwithstanding subsection (a)(2), may permit the participation of children 8 years of age or older if the focus of the program continues to remain on families with young children.

SEC. 1207. [20 U.S.C. 6367] APPLICATIONS.

(a) SUBMISSION.—To be eligible to receive a subgrant under this part, an eligible entity shall submit an application to the State educational agency in such form and containing or accom-

panied by such information as the State educational agency shall require.

(b) REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION.—Each application shall include documentation, satisfactory to the State educational agency, that the eligible entity has the qualified personnel needed—

(1) to develop, administer, and implement an Even Start program under this part; and

(2) to provide access to the special training necessary to prepare staff for the program, which may be offered by an eligible organization.

(c) PLAN.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Such application shall also include a plan of operation and continuous improvement for the program which shall include—

(A) a description of the program objectives, strategies to meet such objectives, and how they are consistent with the program indicators established by the State;

(B) a description of the activities and services that will be provided under the program, including a description of how the program will incorporate the program elements required by section 1205;

(C) a description of the population to be served and an estimate of the number of participants to be served;

(D) as appropriate, a description of the applicant's collaborative efforts with institutions of higher education, community-based organizations, the State educational agency, private elementary schools, or other eligible organizations in carrying out the program for which assistance is sought;

(E) a statement of the methods that will be used—

(i) to ensure that the programs will serve families most in need of the activities and services provided by this part;

(ii) to provide services under this part to individuals with special needs, such as individuals with limited English proficiency and individuals with disabilities; and

(iii) to encourage participants to remain in the program for a time sufficient to meet the program's purpose;

(F) a description of how the plan is integrated with other programs under this Act or other Acts, as appropriate, consistent with section 14306; and

(G) a description of how the plan provides for rigorous and objective evaluation of progress toward the program objectives described in subparagraph (A) and for continuing use of evaluation data for program improvement.

(2) DURATION OF THE PLAN.—Each plan submitted under paragraph (1) shall—

- (A) remain in effect for the duration of the eligible entity's participation under this part; and
- (B) be periodically reviewed and revised by the eligible entity as necessary.
- (d) CONSOLIDATED APPLICATION.—The plan described in subsection (c)(1)(F) may be submitted as part of a consolidated application under section 14302.

SEC. 1208. [20 U.S.C. 6368] AWARD OF SUBGRANTS.

(a) SELECTION PROCESS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The State educational agency shall establish a review panel in accordance with paragraph (3) that will approve applications that—

- (A) are most likely to be successful in—
 - (i) meeting the purpose of this part; and
 - (ii) effectively implementing the program elements required under section 1205;
- (B) demonstrate that the area to be served by such program has a high percentage or a large number of children and families who are in need of such services as indicated by high levels of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, limited-English proficiency, or other need-related indicators, such as a high percentage of children to be served by the program who reside in a school attendance area eligible for participation in programs under part A, a high number or percentage of parents who have been victims of domestic violence, or a high number or percentage of parents who are receiving assistance under a State program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.);
- (C) provide services for at least a three-year age range, which may begin at birth;
- (D) demonstrate the greatest possible cooperation and coordination between a variety of relevant service providers in all phases of the program;
- (E) include cost-effective budgets, given the scope of the application;
- (F) demonstrate the applicant's ability to provide the non-Federal share required by section 1204(b);
- (G) are representative of urban and rural regions of the State; and
- (H) show the greatest promise for providing models that may be adopted by other family literacy projects and other local educational agencies.

(2) PRIORITY FOR SUBGRANTS.—The State educational agency shall give priority for subgrants under this subsection to applications that—

- (A) target services primarily to families described in paragraph (1)(B); or

(B) are located in areas designated as empowerment zones or enterprise communities.

(3) REVIEW PANEL.—A review panel shall consist of at least three members, including one early childhood professional, one adult education professional, and one individual with expertise in family literacy programs, and may include other individuals, such as one or more of the following:

(A) A representative of a parent-child education organization.

(B) A representative of a community-based literacy organization.

(C) A member of a local board of education.

(D) A representative of business and industry with a commitment to education.

(E) An individual who has been involved in the implementation of programs under this title in the State.

(b) DURATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subgrants under this part may be awarded for a period not to exceed four years.

(2) STARTUP PERIOD.—The State educational agency may provide subgrant funds to an eligible recipient, at such recipient's request, for a three- to six-month startup period during the first year of the four-year grant period, which may include staff recruitment and training, and the coordination of services, before requiring full implementation of the program.

(3) CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY.—In awarding subgrant funds to continue a program under this part after the first year, the State educational agency shall review the progress of each eligible entity in meeting the objectives of the program referred to in section 1207(c)(1)(A) and shall evaluate the program based on the indicators of program quality developed by the State under section 1210.

(4) INSUFFICIENT PROGRESS.—The State educational agency may refuse to award subgrant funds if such agency finds that the eligible entity has not sufficiently improved the performance of the program, as evaluated based on the indicators of program quality developed by the State under section 1210, after—

(A) providing technical assistance to the eligible entity; and

(B) affording the eligible entity notice and an opportunity for a hearing.

(5) GRANT RENEWAL.—

(A) An eligible entity that has previously received a subgrant under this part may reapply under this part for additional subgrants.

(B) The Federal share of any subgrant renewed under subparagraph (A) shall be limited in accordance with section 1204(b).

SEC. 1209. [20 U.S.C. 6369] EVALUATION.

From funds reserved under section 1202(b)(1), the Secretary shall provide for an independent evaluation of programs assisted under this part—

- (1) to determine the performance and effectiveness of programs assisted under this part;
- (2) to identify effective Even Start programs assisted under this part that can be duplicated and used in providing technical assistance to Federal, State, and local programs; and
- (3) to provide States and eligible entities receiving a subgrant under this part, directly or through a grant or contract with an organization with experience in the development and operation of successful family literacy services, technical assistance to ensure local evaluations undertaken under section 1205(10) provide accurate information on the effectiveness of programs assisted under this part.

SEC. 1210. [20 U.S.C. 6369a] INDICATORS OF PROGRAM QUALITY.

Each State receiving funds under this part shall develop, based on the best available research and evaluation data, indicators of program quality for programs assisted under this part. Such indicators shall be used to monitor, evaluate, and improve such programs within the State. Such indicators shall include the following:

- (1) With respect to eligible participants in a program who are adults—
 - (A) achievement in the areas of reading, writing, English language acquisition, problem solving, and numeracy;
 - (B) receipt of a high school diploma or a general equivalency diploma;
 - (C) entry into a postsecondary school, job retraining program, or employment or career advancement, including the military; and
 - (D) such other indicators as the State may develop.
- (2) With respect to eligible participants in a program who are children—
 - (A) improvement in ability to read on grade level or reading readiness;
 - (B) school attendance;
 - (C) grade retention and promotion; and
 - (D) such other indicators as the State may develop.

[Section 1604(n) of the LIFT Act provides:

“(n) INDICATORS OF PROGRAM QUALITY.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall notify each State that receives funds under part B of title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 that to be eligible to receive fiscal year 2001 funds under part B, such

shall submit to the Secretary, not later than June 30, 2001, its indicators of program quality as described in section 1210 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. A State that fails to comply with this subsection shall be ineligible to receive funds under such part in subsequent years unless such State submits to the Secretary, not later than June 30 of the year in which funds are requested, its indicators of program quality as described in section 1210 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.”.]

SEC. 1211. [20 U.S.C. 6369b] RESEARCH.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry out, through grant or contract, research into the components of successful family literacy services, to use—

- (1) to improve the quality of existing programs assisted under this part or other family literacy programs carried out under this Act or the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act; and
- (2) to develop models for new programs to be carried out under this Act or the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act.

(b) SCIENTIFICALLY BASED RESEARCH ON FAMILY LITERACY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—From amounts reserved under section 1202(b)(2), the National Institute for Literacy, in consultation with the Secretary, shall carry out research that—

- (A) is scientifically based reading research (as defined in section 2252); and
- (B) determines—
 - (i) the most effective ways of improving the literacy skills of adults with reading difficulties; and
 - (ii) how family literacy services can best provide parents with the knowledge and skills they need to support their children’s literacy development.

(2) USE OF EXPERT ENTITY.—The National Institute for Literacy, in consultation with the Secretary, shall carry out the research under paragraph (1) through an entity, including a Federal agency, that has expertise in carrying out longitudinal studies of the development of literacy skills in children and has developed effective interventions to help children with reading difficulties.

(c) DISSEMINATION.—The National Institute for Literacy shall disseminate, pursuant to section 2258, the results of the research described in subsections (a) and (b) to States and recipients of subgrants under this part.

SEC. 1212. [20 U.S.C. 6370] CONSTRUCTION.

Nothing in this part shall be construed to prohibit a recipient of funds under this part from serving students participating in Even Start simultaneously with students with similar educational needs, in the same educational settings where appropriate.

TITLE XIV — GENERAL PROVISIONS

PART A — DEFINITIONS

SEC. 14101. [20 U.S.C. 8801] DEFINITIONS.

Except as otherwise provided, for the purposes of this Act, the following terms have the following meanings:

* * * * *

(15) FAMILY LITERACY SERVICES.—The term “family literacy services” means services provided to participants on a voluntary basis that are of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family, and that integrate all of the following activities:

- (A) Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children.
- (B) Training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children.
- (C) Parent literacy training that leads to economic self sufficiency.
- (D) An age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.

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